MANUAL

OF THE

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

This original work in French received in 1859 *the* IMPRIMATUR *of his Lordship the Archbishop of Paris.*

IMPRIMATUR :

Parisüs, 5° die augusti 1924.

G. AUDOLLENT Vic. Général.

MANUAL

OF THE

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

18th EDITION

PARIS

AT THE SECRETARIAT OF THE SOCIETY

6, RUE FURSTENBERG, 6

(6th arrondissement)

—

1924

APPROBATION

OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL DUBOIS

ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS.

We, Louis-Ernest Dubois, by the mercy of God and the favour of the Holy Apostolic See, Cardinal-Priest of the Holy Roman Church under the Title of Saint Mary « in Aquiro », Archbishop of Paris.

Have approved and approve of this new edition of *The Manual of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.*

We desire that this *Manual* should be of assistance to the members of this pious and charitable Society preserving its spirit and its traditions.

Given at Paris the 30th April 1922, on the solemnity of the translation of the relics of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Louis, Cardinal DUBOIS,
Archbishop of Paris.

ac: 1854

PREFACE

The first edition of the *Manual* appeared in 1845. The volume contained the Rule of the Society, with some explanatory notes, the circulars of the President-General, the first general Report and extracts from those following, notices of the works undertaken by our founders, diverse prayers, and, as a crown to the work, the two Briefs by which His Holiness Gregory XVI deigned to sanction with his august approbation the organisation which the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul had given itself.

As the development of the Society proceeded, and as the course of years saw its operations extending, the *Manual* received successive additions designed to make known to the brothers the numerous spiritual favours due to the liberality of the Sovereign Pontiffs, to recall the most important events of its history, and to recommend works of which the utility became more and more evident.

The advantages of these additions have been counterbalanced by some inconveniences, and the *Manual* lost some of its character in becoming more verbose. From 1859 onwards it appeared in two parts each forming a small volume; the idea of publishing *abridgments* had also arisen in many countries.

It has seemed well to take note of this tendency which might also itself involve inconveniences and lead to regretable suppressions. A careful revision has shown that a certain number of documents might be omitted, and the size of the *Manual* sensibly reduced, without depriving it of its former appearance, and, even less, of its practical usefulness. As a result, the division into two parts was useless, and the *Manual*, in a single volume, became once again what its title literally signified — a handy book. It has appeared in this form since the year 1888. The present edition which is the 18th, has some modifications compared with the last, published in 1915.

Whatever have been the omissions and the modifications which it was found necessary to make, it was thought right to reproduce the Introduction to the first edition as well as the general considerations, which, in this edition

precede the text of the Rule, these documents being interesting as the history of our Society. The writers have scrupulously abstained from changing the *General Rule* and its two supplements the *Rule for Superior Councils* and the *Rule for Central Councils*. These are our constitutions which we ought to respect in their most minute details.

December 1921.

MANUAL

OF THE

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

INTRODUCTION

September, 1845.

Twelve years have elapsed since the first Conference of St. Vincent de Paul was established to visit the poor, and practice, to the extent of its resources, works of mercy. Since then, this Association, though humble and obscure in its origin, has not ceased to obtain the blessing of God, and to prosper by the help of charity and the protection of the Church. From Paris, its birth-place, it spread over the kingdom ; from France it passed to other countries, and, at present, in distant lands, amid customs, nationalities, tongues, all varying the one from the other, members of our family

are everywhere seen imitating, with equal ardour, the admirable example of our illustrious patron, devoting, in the name of Jesus Christ, a portion of their time to the service of the poor, blending temporal almsgiving with pious exhortation, and aiming to regenerate the soul, by recalling to the Christian his sublime destiny.

This period of twelve years was not, therefore, a time of barrenness, but filled with good works and many happy results, and, in order to continue those works and render permanent these results, certain traditions have been established, several rules adopted. But it must not be supposed that, in the career of charity, the path is ever smooth or free from obstacles ; that in it, as in all other undertakings in this world, experience is not bought at the expense of time and reverses, Such being the fact, was it not therefore prudent to pause, trom time to time, and, before starting off anew, carefully to review the past ?

And, in fact, on several occasions, as exigencies required, has this course been followed, and always with profitable results. In this way our Rules, the fruit of long experience, were gradually formed and commited to writing; circulars were issued to inform the neophytes of the Society of what their predecessors had accomplished, and recall to the elder members the principles which they had themselves

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laid down, and from which it was most important not to depart ; whilst, at a subsequent period, as these desultory communications were insufficient to keep pace with the wants created by the rapid multiplication of Conferences, general annual reports, embodying the humble but consoling results which love of the poor and zeal for the salvation of souls had produced among us, were published. Through the blessing of God, these publications, we may be allowed to say, have not been useless, for they have taught us to appreciate the value of works wrought together, quickened our interest in them and stimulated their increase; they have fostered one uniform spirit in all the Conferences, and produced amongst them that sort of family likeness, which an identity of faith and the continual influence of the same views, the same hopes, the same principles, ever engender.

But what sufficed for the past is inadequate for present requirements. A twelve years' existence has wrought many changes in our organisation; the future is probably preparing yet more. It is, therefore no longer possible in order to remain such as we were, to content ourselves with oral regulations, or even with our former occasional publications, sent forth, either to recall important facts in our history, or to guide our steps aright, by solving various problems

as they arose. Unconnected with each other, in their subjects, or by the occasions which called them forth, those publications would soon be forgotten if pains were not taken to collect them, to gather them, as it were, in a bundle and thus to place in the hands of all, the summary of our modest archives.

These considerations induced the Council-General to issue the present compilation, under the title of *Manual of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.*

Embracing the Rule of the Society, the circulars of Presidents, the first general report and extracts of subsequent reports, this collection will thus place before the eyes of our associates a picture of the daily occupations and life of our Conferences, recall many useful precedents and decisions, founded on past experience, which might otherwise be buried in the passing years. It will likewise prevent discussions in our meetings which might otherwise usurp the time dedicated to the practice of charity, and show any persons who may interest themselves in our affairs, what we have been, what we now are and desire ever to remain. We trust this short treatise may truly deserve the title of *Manual*, and prove a useful and frequent pocket-companion, either for the purposes of piety, or for the study of our principles and our spirit.

Many important and practical results will, the Council-General trusts, accrue from this work; but there is one which should, above others, be produced by it; which alone would amply repaid the labour it has cost — we mean a clear, distinct impression, upon each member, of the spirit, the object, the tendencies of the Society of which he has become a member. In fact, is not the spirit of a charitable society its very life, its inmost element, and that to which, above all, it should cling? Should not this spirit be constantly studied by him who truly desires to fulfil its duties? Can the spirit of a charitable society ever be forgotten, without entailing degeneracy, disorganisation, and even annihilation?

The spirit of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul is mirrored in every line on the following pages; but this point strikes us so forcibly that we deem it indispensable to add some further observations.

It would be a very false idea of the spirit which inspired the birth of our Society to suppose that, from its first beginning, the future to which God destined it, was at all foreseen. Those among us who first entered our family and remember its origin, know, on the contrary, that such a thought was far from our expectations, and even from our design. Assuredly, no one looked forward to an institution embra-

cing a great number of persons, commanding vast resources, propagating itself in the most different localities, attracting everywhere the sympathies of the public and the solemn benedictions of the Church. But one thing was certain — that almsgiving is an imperative duty upon Christians, and that by ceasing to be merciful, they fly from the precepts of the Gospel. This again was certain — that if the precept is fulfilled by entrusting to intelligent hands the alms one is bound to bestow, there are, likewise, special graces attached even to that very distribution. It was remembered how often Jesus Christ exhorted His disciples to assist the suffering, to visit the sick, to console the afflicted; and, rigidly discarding every political bias, we desired to follow these counsels, in order thereby to claim the reward promised by our Lord. This we sought; this was our ruling idea, and for a long time, things went no further. If, later, success transcended our hopes, if public confidence increased our resources — for a long time so limited — our fundamental character still remained the same, and we continued *essentially* a Christian Brotherhood, desirous of aiding the poor that we might gain the merits attached to this pious work of assuaging misery, that we might, in the words of a celebrated preacher, place *our chastity under the protection of our charity.*

This primitive and fundamental character of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul undoubtedly constitutes its strength, and caused its rapid expansion. Oftentimes, in fact, when a few Christians have endeavoured to assemble in a quiet way under the peaceful banner of our Holy Patron, it happened that many good people became alarmed, and forthwith magnified the new comers into rivals of pre-existing institutions; of the Sisters of Charity, the Clergy, or official charitable establishments. The poor, it would be said, are already abundantly provided for; to do more is not advisable, but rather encourages laziness, and if no real good is accomplished, why lavish resources at the risk of introducing confusion where economy and order now prevail? With such greetings have new Conferences sometimes been received particularly in places where the more hideous phases of poverty were rarely seen; and, possibly there may be a shadow of truth in these objections. But if in visiting the poor we aim chiefly at benefiting ourselves, such objections lose their force; and those who, in the first instance, feared us as rivals, soon wish us success. For it must be a source of real joy, to those who desire that practical piety should flourish, to see men of every rank and condition, and age, and shade of opinion, united by the sacred ties of Faith, raise themselves above all spirit

of Party to serve an apprenticeship to good works; mount to the garrets of the poor to solace their miseries, and return with souls quickened to compassion by the sight of human wretchedness; thus taking their share in the ever difficult task of reconciling the poor with the rich, the unfortunate with those who are accounted happy in this world.

A second distinctive characteristic of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, is a frank, Christian cordiality between its members. When our Society was limited in numbers, and our meetings were social gatherings in which personal acquintance banished all formal restraint, Conference-day was held as a day of rejoicing, for it united, in familiar intercourse, friends whom the labour of the week had separated. Even now, although we have become more numerous, and persons of every social position have joined our ranks, and men of mature years flock to assist us with their experience, the same feelings continue to exist. Without knowing each other, we are yet friends; without coming into personal contact, we yet readily understand each other, for we are unanimous in what Bossuet terms *The Ruling affair of life* — the affair of salvation, as well for our neighbours as for ourselves personally.

A reciprocal confidence, a christian fraternity, are, then, our sole bonds of union, and, if

amongst us the neophytes seek instruction in the practice of common works from those whose longer membership has given them experience; if the latter offer advice and their suggestions have some authority and weight; if, finally, to further our common interests, a Council, ready to serve all, is established, it is because unanimity exists among us, and no one wishes to rule over others. *Cor unum et anima una.*

Love and peace are two blessings which we endeavour to preserve amidst us, and, if we enjoy them ourselves, should we not attempt to diffuse them, especially among the poor, whose troubles we endeavour to assuage, whose miseries we try to alleviate? Who, in fact, is not aware that physical want is, often, the least of their misfortunes. The old man alone in the world, the orphan child may, no doubt, suffer from cold and hunger; and yet, of all evils, these may possibly be the least dreaded, for public commiseration may readily come to their assistance. But that which afflicts them is, that no friendly hand ever presses theirs, no kind heart shares the burden of their sorrows, and hence, there is for them a terrible void. Here, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul endeavours to fill up the chasm. Its members go forth among the poor, not simply to dispense material help, but with a tender heart, from which, through the grace of Jesus Christ, flow words of conso-

lation, which are truly gifts of *the best kind;* they practically convince the poor man that he is not only commiserated and assisted, but beloved. The brother of St. Vincent de Paul does not confine himself to a flying visit; he sits down, perhaps on the only chair, and there he listens to the misfortunes of the poor; he presses them to tell him certain things which weigh on them, he even mingles his tears with theirs, and with the help of patience, affection, and time, he causes to be reborn in those dried up hearts, the friendship which he manifests to them. Oftentimes the poor are unbelievers; often times ignorant. They know not that this life of sorrow and expiation is followed by eternity; that in Heaven reigns a merciful and indulgent God, who chastises His children for their trial and improvment, and who, for sufferings patiently born in this world, promises an incommensurate and everlasting recompense. Uninstructed in these truths, the poor, instead of uniting their sufferings with those of a Saviour God; instead of making them, after the example of so many Christians, a cause of hope and a source of merit, blaspheme Divine Providence, curse the day on which they were born, and give themselves up to despair. How useful to a soul in such a state may not the Society of St. Vincent de Paul become. By revealing to the unhappy man his immortal destiny, by putting before

him infinite felicity, as the immense compensation for transitory evils, his heart may be awakened to hope; thus is presented to the world that admirable, and yet so frequent spectacle, of poverty borne with cheerfulness and dignity, nay with joy, and hailed as a precious title of fellowship with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It is thus that the Conferences of St Vincent de Paul have ever understood the duty of visiting the poor; and most happy results have flowed from this view. In fact, how little can we do, at best, towards alleviating the material wants of the poor? How little towards assuaging hunger and clothing nakedness? Scarce two pounds a year can we give, even to large families completely destitute. We are, therefore, in this respect necessarily restricted by our limited resources. But when we have to bestow spiritual alms upon the poor, then indeed, is our treasury inexhaustible, because we command the very graces of God Himself; them may we lavish as we list, without restraint. Contrast the moral condition of two families from whom the goods of this world have been equally withheld, the one having lost the precious germ of faith, whilst the other has carefully nurtured it. Examine their countenances, their appearance; listen to their complaints; gather the sum of joys and sorrows

meted out to each, and it will easily be seen that, whilst with the former, irreligion adds but to the tortures of despair, faith elevates and cheers the latter and infuses a calm serenity throughout the family circle.

Let us, therefore, never depart from our customs in this most essential point; let us preserve our Rules, and, as has already been said, our Rules will preserve us.

In reviewing the long and varied series of pious works undertaken by the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, it will readily be perceived that the force of circumstances, and the necessity of keeping pace in our efforts with evils as they arose, gradually formed that link of charity which, extending its hand to man in his cradle, only relaxes its friendly grasp when the tomb closes over his remains. This reveals another and a striking trait of our Society. No good work is alien to it, as has often been repeated; for we are not circumscribed by any previously determined boundary, which it is inexpedient to exceed. But if, in acting thus, we yield to the pious exigencies of charity, we are not the less anxious to conform to the rules of Christian prudence. Our pious industry covers a wide range indeed; but then, have we not been twelve years in existence? We embrace within our scope the whole course of human life; but throughout our long contact with the poor, we

have been driven, as it were, from one thing to another — from domiciliary visits to attending the sick; to the care of apprentices; to the formation of circulating libraries; to the publication of almanacs and pious books so that our various works were all developed, little by little, without, previous design, and, almost in spite of ourselves. As a reward of our unwillingness to *outstrip Providence*, to borrow our Holy Patron s expression, it has happened with us, as with him, that an apparently feeble germ has produced abundant and unexpected fruits. This progress of which the *Manual*, in every page shows the traces, deserves frequent and serious meditation. Works of charity should ever progress, but should, also, bide their proper time. When, eager for success, we attempt to accomplish everything at once, we run the risk of compromising the good already done, for an improvement, oftentimes problematical; and assume a grave responsibility, if the results equal not our expectations. Let us continue to shun such dangers; let us push on and develop our humble labours; let every year witness the budding of some new idea among us, some fresh improvement, and thus shall we shield ourselves against apathy which, so easily, contents itself with what is already done. Let us, at the same time, advance step by step, and, guided by experience, undertake only such things

as have been long and carefully considered. Works founded in the spirit of religion bear their proper fruits only in course of time; for, by a merciful dispensation of Providence, they participate in the wonderful fecundity of the patience of God who knows how to wait, because He is eternal. *Patiens quia aeternus.*

Many other characteristics, inherent in our Conferences, might be pointed out, but we will conclude by citing one, which alone will suffice, as summing up several others; we allude to Christian simplicity, or rather, humility.

If we consider how little we really do, it will not, perhaps, be difficult to remain faithful to this virtue; for, although we may have greatly increased within a few years, aided a great number of poor, and guided numerous apprentices, still what are we, what can we ever be, but obscure and defective instruments of that Providence who deigns to use us, in spite of our unworthiness? However, as the inclination which leads the human mind to vanity is, at all times, strong and insinuating, we should endeavour to perpetuate those practices which have thus far held in check amongst us, this fatal tendency. Unknown, in our early days, to the world, for a long time we sought to remain in the same obscurity; and not only was it contrary to our custom to make known to the public the alms we distributed to the poor, to

issue reports or monetary statements, but we even hesitated about soliciting alms beyond the circle of our intimate acquintances. Subsequently, that which was preciously inadvisable, became just and opportune; and then, through the eloquent voices of others, we implored, in behalf of our poor, the pity of the faithful. This, as a necessary consequence, exacted the publication of statements, to place before the eyes of all, the uses to which the means confided to our care had been dedicated, and finally, more detailed reports were drawn up to show the object of our meetings and attract to them those already inclined by the sympathies of their heats, and the ardour of their faith. But if, apparently, some new practices have been introduced into our Society, its foundation ever remains untouched. Thus, it has always been understood that, if we are constrained to address the public, it should be in favour of our poor and not of ourselves; that, if we have to speak of our works, we should always be silent about ourselves and, finally, that if by this publicity, we might enable persons desirous, of studying our organisation, to become acquainted with ist details, we should not, under any pretext, seek to attract towards ourselves an attention not intended for us.

Such, in these matters, has been our constant tradition; such is the purpose of the numerous

documents embraced in this *Manual;* such the spirit in which its publication was undertaken. What virtue, in fact, is more necessary to a Christian association than humility? Does it not, by inspiring self-renouncement and checking opinionativeness, render our meetings peaceful and friendly? Does it not banish from them that most terrible calamity, the susceptibilities of self-love? Does it not teach us never to desire the first place among our associates; to accept dignity only as a burthen, *onus non munus;* and thus prevent a few from absorbing the work destined for all? Does it not, in fine, draw upon those associations which practice it, the abundant blessing of God, since it inspires every one of them to refer to Him at all times and everywhere, the good that is done, and of which He is, in reality, the sole author? Happy the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul if, through the protection of their holy patron, they faithfully cultivate this virtue.

Such, briefly traced, is the path which the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul have endeavoured to follow, and the preceding considerations must convince those who have pondered attentively over the life of our illustrious patron, that these traditions — to which we owe all that we are — are simply a summary of his maxims. The world indeed, regards St. Vincent de Paul merely as one of the benefactors of

humanity; honours him as the founder of useful and well-conceived institutions; those, on the other hand, who have meditated on his life, closely studied his actions, and dived into the recess of his thoughts, well know, that, if he deserved the glorious title of *father of the poor*, it was only because he had learned to love them, in loving Jesus Christ. If he lavished upon the poor his anxious care, and in such a way as to elevate, not to humble, it was because he honoured them as the images and members of his own Divine Master. If, for the purposes of charity, he established numerous Confraternities of ladies, intituted the Congregation of the Mission, and the Sisters of Charity; if he evangelised, at the same time, his own country and distant lands; if he contributed to give to the Church of France that great renown which it has enjoyed for two centuries, and possesses even now, it was because he looked upon himself as a docile instrument of Providence, whom he strove rather to obey than outstrip. He ever preferred to see good accomplished through others rather than through himself, and never personally interfered, save when other evangelical workers were wanting; and after having laboured, even *until his limbs were wearied and the sweat trickled from his brow*, his deep humility caused him to regard, as nothing, all that he had done, and to view

himself as a useless servant. All this is known to those who have taken pleasure in studying the life of this great Saint; and all this is that which the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul do not wish to forget. Doubtless, and they cannot too often repeat it, they are at an infinite distance from this guide so sure; they have not the same faith, nor the same confidence in God, nor the same zeal; and, all combined, they are far from having distributed as much help as this charitable servant of the poor did by himself alone; but notwithstanding so many reasons for inferiority, they do not the less love to walk in his footsteps, to follow his example, and to obey his maxims, because they are persuaded that, in thus acting, they are conforming themselves in the limited measure of their powers, to the precepts of Him who is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

THE RULE

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES

December, 1835.

We are now entering upon that formal organisation we have long wished for. It has been delayed, for our association has already existed some years. But were we not bound to ascertain that God wished that it should continue, before determining the form which it should assume? Was it not necessary that it should be well established — that it should know what Heaven required of it — that it should judge what it could do by what it had done, before framing its rules and prescribing its duties? Now we have only to embody, as it were, in Regulations, usages already followed and cherished; and this is a guarantee that our rules will be well received by all, and will not be forgotten.

Our little association for a time bore the name of *Conference of charity of St. Vincent*

de Paul; this name of *Conference*, which was its own since its initiation, it has been zealous to keep so as not to forget the circumstances of its origin. Some among us, whilst devoting ourselves to the defence of the dogmas of religion, in the then very stormy discussions of literary societies, thought that it was not enough to speak, that we should also act; hence came the works of charity to which they devoted themselves—hence the *Conference of Charity:*

Having become numerous, and being obliged to divide into sections, moreover, many of us desiring to meet together in other towns where we were to reside thenceforth, the name of *Conference* has continued to be applied to each of those sections, all of which are comprised under the common denomination of the *Society of St. Vincent de Paul.*

We must always avoid giving to our undertakings the name of any particular member, whatever may have been his individual services, or of the places in which we assemble, for fear we may accustom ourselves to look upon it as the work of man. Christian works belong to God alone, the sole author of all good.

Our association originated in religious motives; we must, therefore, look for the rules of our conduct nowhere but in the spirit of religion — in the examples and words of our Saviour — in the instructions of the Church — in the lives of the Saints. Such are the reasons why we have placed ourselves under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Vincent

de Paul, to whom we owe peculiar devotion, and whose footsteps we must sedulously endeavour to follow.

It pleased Jesus Christ to practice that which afterwards He was to teach mankind; *coepit facere et docere.* We are desirous of imitating that Divine Model so far as our weakness will allow.

The object then of the Conference is, first, to maintain its members, by mutual example, in the practice of a Christian life; secondly, to visit the poor at their dwellings, to carry them succour in kind, to afford them, also, religious consolations, remembering these words of our Master : *non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei;* thirdly, to apply ourselves, according to our capabilities and the time which we can spare, to the elementary and Christian instruction of poor children, whether free or imprisoned, seeing that what we do for the least among our brethren, Jesus Christ has promised that He will accept as done to Himself; fourthly, to distribute moral and religious books; fifthly, to be willing to undertake any other sort of charitable work for which our resources may be adequate, and which will not thwart the chief end of the Society, and for which it may demand our co-operation upon the proposal of its leaders.

The Society of Charity is composed of active members, and of others who cannot devote themselves to the works in which it is engaged. The members of this latter class assist the

former by their efforts and by their influence; by their offering and their prayers, they supply the absence of that actual co-operation which they are obliged to forego.

The Society of Charity should endeavour to attain and practice every virtue; there are, however, some virtues which are more essentially necessary to them, for the due discharge of the charitable duties to which they devote themselves. Among these are self-denial, Christian prudence, the active love of our neighbour, zeal for the salvation of souls, meekness of heart and word, and above all, the spirit of brotherly charity. They ought, therefore, to meditate on those maxims of the Gospel which recommend these virtues, and should make them the rule of their lives. It is for this purpose that these maxims are here recalled to mind and developments given to them applicable to our work.

1. By *self-denial* we should understand the surrendering of our own opinion, without which surrender no association is durable. The man who is in love with his own ideas will disdain the opinion of others; contempt for our brethren, far from uniting, engenders division. We should, therefore, willingly acquiesce in the judgment of others, and should not feel annoyed if our own propositions be not accepted by them. Our mutual good-will should proceed from the heart, and should be without bounds. We should equally avoid all spirit of contention with the poor, and we must not consider our-

selves offended if they do not yield implicitly to our advice; we should not attempt to make them receive it as from authority and by command — we should content ourselves with proposing what is good, and zealously exhorting to its pratice, leaving to God the care of making our words bear fruit, if such be His will.

2. *Christian prudence.* Among the poor there are some who have the happiness to be good Christians ; others are careless, and some, perhaps, irreligious. We ought not to repulse them, even in this latter case our language ought to vary according to the disposition of those whom we address, remembering that Jesus Christ recommended His disciples to unite the wisdom of the serpent to the simplicity of the doves. Bounty opens the heart to confidence, and it is by charitable gifts that we prepare the way for spiritual benefits. St. Vincent de Paul often recommended not to try the latter until the former had been freely bestowed. Now the poor are of either sex. As the *Society of Charity* is chiefly composed of young men, they should never forget that their mission is not to such of the other sex as are young, lest they should meet with their own destruction, whilst desiring to promote the salvation of others; moreover, it is necessary to shun even the appearance of evil, and all which might scandalise the weak.

3. *Love of our neighbour, and zeal for the salvation of souls.* This is the very essence of the *Conference of Charity.* He who is not

animated by this twofold sentiment, which with the Christian forms but one feeling, should not become a member. We must never murmur at the labours, the fatigues, nor even at the repulses to which the exercise of charity may subject us. We expose ourselves to all these things, in associating for the service of our neighbour. Neither should we regret the pecuniary sacrifices nhat we make for our work, esteeming ourselves happy in offering something to Jesus Christ in the person of the poor, and in being able to carry some relief to His suffering members. We should make these sacrifices with an entire absence of personal feeling. No member should consider that the poor adopted by him are entitled to peculiar advantages in the distribution of relief, merely because he may presume that he has contributed more to the common fund than other members.

4. Our Divine Model was meek and humble of heart; « Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart, » — *Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde;* and our patron, St. Vincent de Paul, prized nothing so highly as *meekness* and *humility*, which are inseparable. We should be kind and obliging to one another, and we should be equally so to the poor whom we visit. We can have no power over the mind, except through meekness — *Beati mites quia possidebunt terram.* The spirit of humility and meekness is more particularly necessary in giving advice, and in exhorting others to fly from evil and to practice

virtue. Without gentleness, zeal for the salvation of souls is a ship without sails.

5. It is a *brotherly spirit* which will make our *Society of Charity* become beneficial to its members and edifying to others. Faithful to the maxims of *Our Divine Master* and of His beloved disciple, let us love one another. We should love one another now and ever, far and near, from one Conference to another, from town to town, from clime to clime. This love will render us able to bear with each other's failings. We shall never give credence to an evil report of a brother but with sorrow; and when we cannot reject the evidence of facts. Then in order to conform ourselves to the will of Him who has confided to each one the care of his neighbour — *unicuique mandavit Deus de proximo suo*—in a spirit of charity, and with all the earnestness of sincere friendship, we will ourselves counsel our falling, or fallen brother, or cause advice to be conveyed to him; we will endeavour to strengthen him in virtue, or raise him from his fall. If any member of the Conference should fall ill, his brethren will visit him, will tend him, if it be necessary, will assuage the irksomeness of his convalescence; if his malady be dangerous, they should take the utmost care that he receives the Sacraments. In a word, the troubles and the joys of each of us shall be shared by all, in accordance with the advice of the Apostle, who tells us to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice.

The unanimity among the members of the *Conference of Charity* of St. Vincent de Paul will be cited as a model of Christion friendship — of a friendship stronger than death, for we will often remember in our prayers to God the brethren whom we have lost.

This sentiment, which, with us, will make of all our hearts one heart, of all our souls, one soul — *cor unum et anima una* — will endear to each of us our little fraternal association; we shall bless it for the good, however trivial, it enables us to perform, we shall love it with tenderness, and even with a greater affection than any other similar work, not because of its excellence, or from pride, but as dutiful children love a poor and deformed mother more than all other women, however remarkable they may be for their riches and for their attractions.

Some other consequences of the foregoing maxims: —

One of the vices most opposed to charity and Christian humility, is envy. We will avoid it, not only amongst ourselves but also in reference to other societies, whose object, like our own, is to succour our neighbour. We will ardently desire, and will behold with pleasure, their prosperity and the good they accomplish; we will rejoice if new brethren join us, if existing societies unite themselves to ours, since greater good will spring from the union, but we will see without jealousy our Christian friends devoting themselves to other good works, the

other societies doing God's work in their own manner, and independently of us. We should have but one desire — to see every one devote himself to do good, and to succour those who suffer : *quis tribuat ut omnis populus prophetet?* Nay more, although we may be fonder of our little association, we will always consider it as less excellent than others; we will regard it, as in fact it is, but as a work formed nobody knows by whom, nor how — born yesterday, and which may die tomorrow.

The same spirit will ever induce us individually to wish the offices of the Society confided to others rather than to ourselves.

We will always remember that we are only laymen, and for the most part young men, without any mission to teach others. For this, and every other reason, we will pay the utmost deference to the counsels which may be given to us by the Society or its heads; we will, above all, follow with docility the course which the ecclesiastical superiors think proper to point out to us. St. Vincent de Paul wished that his disciples should not undertake any good work without having first secured the assent and received the benediction of the local Pastors. No more will we ever undertake any new and important work within an ecclesiastical jurisdiction, without consulting him who is invested with it. We will do nothing in opposition to spiritual authority, considering as an evil the good which we would attempt contrary to its opinion. We will extend to a

certain degree, this deference to the Sisters of Charity, or even to laymen who may have offices of charity to perform towards those whom we also desire to succour, esteeming it an honour to be considered the least among our brethren, and to be no more than servants and instruments of others in regard to the poor. Lastly, among ourselves, the younger will defer to the elder, and the newly admitted members to those who are of longer standing.

We are the dispensers of the gifts of God, who is the common Father of all mankind, and makes His sun shine upon all. Our love of our neighbour, then, will be without respect of persons. The title of the poor to our commiseration will be their poverty itself. We will not enquire whether they belong to any party. Jesus Christ came to redeem and save all men, the Greeks as well as Jews, barbarians as well as Romans. We will not discriminate more than did He between those whom suffering and misery have visited. Nevertheless, St. Paul recommends to Christians to assist, in the first place, their brethren in the faith : *ad domesticos fidei*. We. therefore, should testify a special interest in those poor who have the happiness of being good Christians, and who honour that title by the virtues which religion inculcates.

The spirit of Charity, together with Christian prudence, will further induce us to banish political discussions for ever from our meetings, general as well as ordinary. St. Vincent de

Paul would not allow his ecclesiastics even to converse upon those differences which arm Princes against each other, or upon the motives of rivalry which estrange nations. With more reason, those who wish to be of one mind, and to exercise a ministry of charity, should abstain from being inflamed by political leanings which array parties in opposition, and from starting among themselves, those irritating questions which divide mankind. Our Society is all charity; politics are wholly foreign to it.

Another efficacious means of maintaining unity amongst us, and of cementing the Christian friendship which is its foundation and its charm, is to present for admission into the Society only such candidates as are worthy of the confidence and affection of our brothers. It might be an advantage for some persons to participate in our charitable work; but perhaps it might not be an advantage for the Society to count them amongst its members. Previous, therefore, to the enrolment of any friend into our ranks, we will carefully enquire whether he be calculated to draw closer those ties which bind us to each other; whether the amenity of his disposition and his Christian demeanour will enhance the value of the small relief which he will be commissioned to carry to the distressed; whether the firmness of his character authorises us to hope that he will persevere in his generous resolutions.

The choice of new members is of the utmost importance. Defections we have already had

to lament — others are going on even now; there will be some always — such is human weakness. Yet the Society will inspire some confidence — will be efficient for some good, only so far as its members will prove its worth by their whole life, and particularly by their perseverance in the acts of charity to which they devote themselves.

Another point no less worthy of our consideration is the discretion which should accompany zeal for the salvation of souls. All fervour is not holy, nor accepted by God. All times are not suitable for instilling new and Christian teaching into the heart. We must know how to wait for God's own time, and to be patient as He is. Often we must wait entire weeks before we are able to inculcate, with effect, even one moral and edifying maxim. Above all, we must never be importunate upon this point. We are not commissioned to perform the good which it is out of our power to effect. On the other hand, the apparently trifling results of our mission must not discourage us. Perhaps the Almighty wills not that we ourselves should witness the happy results which our efforts and our sacrifices may at last produce. Our charity would be less meritorious, and might expose us to vainglory if we saw it always crowned with success.

We should never omit Christian prudence in fulfilling our ministrations to the poor. Unfortunately, and especially in large towns, the poor sometimes try to conceal such resources

as they may have, and thus draw to themselves that sympathy and those alms which should be shared with others. Therefore, without arming ourselves with a distrust which might be injurious to them, we must be circumspect. It is not wise to rely too implicitly upon their first statements.

We have, therefore, been accustomed, and we will continue, to seek information about our poor, from the Sisters of Charity, the parochial Clergy, and all other persons who may be able to give us correct information as to their state. We must be provident for the poor, who are seldom provident for themselves, if we wish to become their true benefactors. We will impress upon them that an existence sustained by the aid of charity is very precarious — we will induce them to exert themselves to earn their own livelihood — we will point out to them sources of employment, and we will assist them to obtain it. If they are sick or unable to work, we will second their endeavour to obtain admission to the asylums established for the aged, the infirm, the sick.

In conclusion, we will never be ashamed of the smallness of our alms. That which is small in the estimation of the rich, is great in the eyes of those who possess nothing. The smallness of our alms is one of the conditions of our existence. We have no other ordinary resources but our own voluntary offerings; these will not be sufficient for considerable works of charity; but our tender interest — our very

manner, will give to our alms a value which they do not possess in themselves.

We must now lay down some rules, and mention some practices we have been in the habit of following; other customs will, doubtless, be hereafter added — other rules will become necessary; but the existing rules, and the customs in use, will suffice to guide our future progress (1).

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(1) Up to this point the explanatory notes are an exact translation of the first edition of the *Manual*.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

UPON THE

ARTICLES

OF

THE GENERAL RULE

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ART. 1. — The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul receives into its ranks all Christian young men who wish to unite themselves in prayer and to participate in the same works of charity, in whatever country they may find themselves.

This article, the object of which is to set forth the aim and the nature of the Society, contains many points of the highest importance.

First, it recalls to mind that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was founded by *young men and for them* ; it is with a view of preserving them of the dangers of every kind that surround them at the commencement of their career, that Conferences have been organised; and if, at a later time, men of more advanced age have come to join themselves to them, and to bring to them

the tribute of their experience, we should not be the less unmindful of the original aim of the Society, and we should seek, as much as possible, to attract to it young men, those especially who, far from their own families, have need of finding Christian surroundings in order to persevere in good. — (*Circular of 1st. November*, 1851.)

It results, moreover, from this article, that the Conferences are intended for men only, that ladies cannot take part in them, either as active or as honorary members. By a natural consequence, the work of the ladies, although founded upon a rule analogous to that of the men, cannot be aggregated to the Society. Conferences may have charitable relations with them, may adopt the cases of the poor whom they recommend, and may recommend others to them in turn; but they must keep entirely separate their government, their resources, their meetings. It will be seen further on that ladies can become benefactresses to the Society, and in that relation participate in numerous Indulgences.

The article adds that the members must be *Christians*, and the 18th article confirms it by adding that « each member sould be careful not to introduce into the Society any one who will not edify his fellow-members or be edified by them. All should strive to love each other, and the poor like brothers ». The Council-General, interpreting the rule, has always understood that this condition could not be considered as fulfilled but among men, Christians not only in feeling but in practice, fulfilling all the duties prescribed by the Church, and especially the Paschal duty. On this subject almost all the *Circulars* may be consulted, in particular those of the 14*th July*, 1841, and of the 31*st May*, 1846.

One of the aims of the Society being to make the poor better men and better Christians, how can we attain this unless we are such ourselves, and how can we inculcate duties which we do not discharge.

It is, also, to be remarked that the primary object which the Society proposes to its members, is their own edification. If they meet together, if they visit the poor, the first object is to make each other better *by a union in prayer*. The aim of the Conference is not, then, principally the alleviation, very praiseworthy no doubt but purely human, of the sufferings of the poor; it is zeal for the salvation of souls, and in particular for the souls of the members themselves. This is a point which must never be lost sight of, for numerous consequences spring from it, especially the selection of the works to be undertaken by Conferences, which ought all to tend towards the sanctification of the members engaged in them.

Still, if charitable works are not the primary object of the Society, they are the principal means made use of to attain that object. There are some associations which are conducive to the sanctification of those engaged in them, such as pious congregations, by their frequent and prolonged prayers; there are others, that strive for the same end by charitable exercises and by penance united to prayer, such as the Third Orders. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has not so high an aim; it does not aspire to be a congregation, a fraternity, a Third Order; it is no more than a pious assembly of Christians desiring to put their life and their morals under the shelter of charity. To ask more for it would be to pervert its character and its institution.

The Council-General has been consulted several times to know if it were expedient to admit as members persons who were not above want. It has always replied in the negative (*See the Circular of the* 14 *July*, 1841.) Doubtless it is not necessary to be favoured by fortune in order to take part in the Society. With regard to this, much consideration must be given to the locality in which the paricular Conference accomplishes its works. For example : the conditons could not be absolutely the same in a poor country district as in a large city; but it is always of consequence that the member should be in a position to help the poor in some degree, however small, and should never have need to be himself assisted. Every one can comprehend the inconvenience which might arise from a contrary usage .

The last words of the article which occupies our attention, « wherever they may happen to reside, » add a new feature most essential to the Society, that is, its universality. Intimately united to the Church, its ambition is to serve it everywhere and for ever, without distinction of race or of country, without difference of language or of government. If there be anything which can unite men by a bond at once the strongest and the purest, surely it is charity, that eternal delight of angels and men, as St. Vincent de Paul called it.

ART. 2. — No work of charity should be regarded as foreign to the Society, although its special object is to visit poor families. Thus, its members are expected to embrace every opportunity of affording consolation to the sick and to prisoners, of instructing poor, unprotected, or imprisoned children, and of

procuring the succours of religion for those who need them, at the hour of death.

Here is presented an applicaton of the principle already referred to, namely, that the Society, above all things, aims at the sanctification of its members. If, in fact, visiting poor families is its most special, indeed, its fundamental work, it is because that is the work which is the most conducive to the edification of the members, and that which is most within their reach. Undoubtedly, it is very meritorious to undertake the patronage of children, or to facilitate marriages among the poor; but the exercise of these works has not the same practical effect *upon the members* as visiting the poor in their garrets, their cellars, or their cottages. To undertake these works it is necessary in some sort to have carried out the visiting of the poor; otherwise, insurmountable difficulties would arise in them, were it but those of inexperience alone, and members would get a distaste for these works, whether on account of being frustrated in them, or because too much time was absorbed in them. On the other hand, visiting the poor attaches you to it, captivates you, because it always produces an immediate result, that of material relief; it is easily practised, and requires but little time. For all these reasons, it ought to be a favourite work of a society composed of men who are engaged in numerous occupations, and this is why the circulars constantly recommend it.

It is well to remark, also, that, if no work of charity should be regarded as foreign to the Society, this expression is always to be understood with this reservation, *that the work should be suited to the special cha-*

racter of the Society. Also it has constantly been regarded as an imperative rule, not to undertake any work relating to females, particularly such as are young and live alone. The Society leaves the care of them, as well as the patronage of schools for young girls, to ladies' associations, or to the indefatigable zeal of the clergy. Moreover, when commencing new works, the rules of prudence should never be forgotten. It is good, very good, that every Conference should exert itself to add some new work to those already in operation; but in doing so the step should be taken without precipitation. and when the necessary means exist No lukewarmness without doubt, but also no rashness, such should be our rule.

ART. 3. — When several membres of the Society are found in any locality, they meet to encourage each other in the practice of virtue. This meeting is called a *Conference*, which was the name originally given to the Society itself.

The Circular of the 1st. December, 1842, referring to the origin of the title given to our meetings, of *Conferences*, which is that usually given in Paris to literary assemblies of young men, recommends most earnestly that the Society should occupy itself with *practising* charity, instead of discussing systems for the relief of the poor. It will be useful to repeat here that passage which puts forward one of the essential points of our organisation : « It is not our office to instruct each other by discourses, but to set examples for mutual edification. Do not allow the spirit of contention, the habits of the forum, to grow amongst us. We do not

mean to find fault with this spirit in itself; discussion is good and necessary, when used in places and applied to objects which need it, but our Society is a working Society; it should do much, and speak little. Let us leave to our officers, to our Councils, the troublesome task of discussing whatever is susceptible of debate; let our Conferences, as a body, keep for themselves the consoling charge of good works. »

Every Conference which desires to obtain admission into the Society, must solicit aggregation from the Council-General, adding to its request the list of its members, an account of its first works, as well as the date of its formation, and an expression of its intention to conform to the regulation and usages of the Society This request is forwarded direct, if the Conference be in a town where there is neither a Particular, a Central, nor a Superior Council; otherwise it is forwarded by the proper Council, who add a favourable or unfavourable opinion upon it.

If the aggregation be advisable, the Council-General grants it. By the simple fact of this aggregation the new Conference participates in the Indulgences granted by the Holy See. Without the fulfilment of this indispensable formality, it would be deprived of them.

Moreover, nothing, is more useful than this organisation. If there were not unity in the aggregations, the Society would be very quickly liable to become a mere agglomeration of several associations having no common spirit, possessing an identity in name only, and in which the most experienced eye would fail to recognise the family tie. The recommendations of the different local Councils, when they exist, are also a useful precaution, since they guarantee to the Council-General the good

internal organisation of the new Conferences, which could only be known upon the spot.

ART. 4. — (1) Should several Conferences be formed in the same town, each takes the name of the parish where its members meet.

(2) They are united by a Particular Council which takes the name of the town where it is established.

The principle laid down by Article 4, of a parochial denomination given to the Conferences, is a result of the essentially Catholic character of the Society. As an obedient child of the Church it connects iself as much as possible with her imperishable hierarchy.

In the case where several conferences exist in one parish, it is indispensable to give to each a name which will clearly distinguish it. The Council-General have made it a rule for some time only to grant aggregation to a conference bearing the name of a Saint, a Blessed or a Venerable, or of a Divine Person, or of a mystery or of a feast celebrated by the Church. The name of Saint Vincent de Paul, however, must not be chosen unless he should be the patron of the parish where the conference is established. When in one town several conferences take the name of the same Saint,s ome other name must be added so as to avoid all possible confusion of one conference with another in current speach or correspondence

ART. 5. — All the Conferences of the Society are united by a Council-General.

This is the place to explain shortly the organisation of the Society.

Its foundations are the Conferences, whose object is practical works.

Over the Conferences, where there are several in the same town, is a Particular Council, the constitution of which which will appear further on.

Over the Particular Council (as well as over isolated Conferences) is either a Central Council, or a Superior Council, embracing within its area the Conferences of several dioceses, or of an entire country.

Above all these is a Council-General, the centre of the whole Society, being a bond of union, a means of unity, and devoting the time and zeal of its members to the common interest.

In this way, each Conference is not isolated, and is not left to itself alone. It has not to form its rule, its traditions, without taking advice of anyone ; on the contrary it forms part of a great Society, between the members of which there exists unity of heart, of intention, of customs; it rests upon the enlightened advice of these different Councils; and while, in carrying out its own works, it preserves the fullest liberty of action, it enjoys the benefits of a direction common to, and accepted by, all.

Need it be added, that the authority of the different Councils, from the Particular Council up to the Council-General, is an active authority, only because it is spontaneously accepted, and that persuasion and good example are the surest, not to say the sole means of supporting this authority? The Church, nevertheless, has wished to give strength to these ties in the manner which is the most effectual for Christians, by granting most valuable indulgences to Conferences aggregated

and Councils instituted by the Council-General. This is the object of several Briefs and Rescripts of which the text will be found hereinafter.

CHAPTER I

THE CONFERENCES

ART. 6. — The Conferences meet upon such days and at such hours as they themselves may appoint.

The fullest latitude is allowed in this matter to the Conferences themselves, for nothing is more variable than the convenience of different localities, and it is of great importance that choice should be made of a day which is the most convenient to the greatest number; otherwise the meetings run the risk of being badly attended, and consequently zeal and charity relax.

It is, however, important to be precise upon a point to which the Council-General attaches much importance — that is, the weekly periodical occurrence of the meetings. As the rules do not lay down this period expressly, an inference has been sometimes drawn, that meetings need only take place every fortnight or every month. Except in rural Conferences, where, on account of distance, difficulty of the roads, or different local circumstances, meetings every eight days would be at times too troublesome, the Council-General has not ceased to advise Conferences to meet every week, as has been the rule since the commencement of the Society, and as is almost the universal practice. The object of our meetings is, as has already been said, to form,

above all things, Christian relations among the members, and to strengthen them in piety by mutual good example. But a meeting every fortnight, and still less every month, is inadequate for such a result, when, moreover, allowances must be made for the absences, more or less numerous, to which sickness, or travelling cannot fail to compel members. The result would be that at the end of a year, they would scarcely have seen, scarcely know each other, and many years may go on in this way without that Christian intimacy which the Society has in view, being formed among the members. Also the Conferences, in which the meetings are far apart, are more cold and more languishing. In the others, on the contrary, a greater affection knits together the brethren and their common work, because they meet together for it oftener, and they assist in it with greater assiduity, because that assiduity becomes more habitual, and because they feel greater satisfaction in it. The interests of the poor are better cared for when the meetings, of which they are the immediate object, take place every eight days, and the treasury of the Conference is better supplied, because the collection, made oftener, becomes naturally more abundant. The strongest reasons exist, then, in favour of weekly meetings, and it is desirable that in towns is should be a rule without exception. But even when a departure from this custom is necessary, as in certain rural districts, it is important to remark that the visit to the poor should always be weekly. Without a visit made at least once a week, it would be almost impossible to have a constant knowledge of the wants of the poor, and to acquire over them an influence which would be salutary for the amelioration of their habits.

ART. 7. — The Conferences should carry on a mutual correspondance in order to edify, themselves, and to recommend to each other, either members if the Society, other young men, or poor families who may change their residence.

The habit of frequent communication between one Conference and another is one of those which has contributed most to the development of the Society, and which should be most sedulously kept up. Relations will be perhaps less intimate as the Society progresses than at the time when they were exchanged between seven or eight Conferences, formed by persons all of whom were mutually acquainted; but it ought not to have less cordiality and freedom, since, as has been said, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a ready-made friendship, and on entering into it one comes, as it were, among a closely united family circle. It is, moreover, to facilitate these familiar intercommunications that the Society has been subdivided as has been shown already. The Conferences, being formed into groups under Central Councils and Superior Councils, should consider that it is by no means intended to detach each from the sole centre, the Council-General, but to bring them together one to another; for, among so many Conferences spread over all the world, intimate relations are not possible in reality, and they can only have on very rare occasions means of communication, but between twenty or thirty Conferences near each other, these communications should be no less frequent than easy.

The object of this correspondence is, above all, to give mutual satisfaction, to communicate to each other

the good which each witnesses ; thus the successful innovations of zeal do not become isolated but are propagated, and thereby works become more general and extended. This is then a cardinal point, since that which is most wanted in what is good, is not that it should be practised individually, but that it should be known to all, in order that it may be carried into execution by all those who desire to do so. These intercommunications take place by means of the visits of members, by printed reports, or still further, through the Circulars, the General Report, and the Montly Bulletin of the Society. Of course, all these communications ought to be simple, modest, and should never become, either for the members or for the Society, a subject from which may be drawn any vainglory for the little good accomplished. St. Vincent de Paul desired that his missionaries shoould preach simply, and that they should not preach themselves, to use his own expression; for a much stronger reason would he have abhorred to see those of his disciples who were the last comers and the least zealous, taking glory to themselves for some most trivial works.

The intercommunication of one Conference with another has for its aim the recommendation of young men who leave their families to settle in a town where the Society exists. Nothing is more useful than this custon. How many young men are there who leave the paternal roof well-disposed to remain pure, chaste, religious. How many have promised it to their mothers, and have promised it to themselves. Nevertheless, no sooner are they settled in their new residence, than they lose all their pious habits and sink into misconduct? the fault is doubtless in the isolation

in which they find themselves from all pious companionship, from all Christian advice. Fortified by example, they would have maintained their rectitude; left to themselves they fall miserably. To give these young men, still practical Christians, a solid support by means of good and pious associations, to form pure companionship for them within the bosom of the Conference, to bestow upon them encouragement, alas too necessary, what service is not this to religion, to their families, and to themselves. Conferences are earnestly solicited to give their best attention to this, so that they should never omit to recommend to other Conferences such of their members as go away, and that they should give the most earnest welcome to young men who come to them furnished with similar recommendations, and particularly that they may surround these youths with those safeguards and those precautions with which every father would wish to surround his son.

As to the poor who change their places of abode, it is likewise a very laudable custom to recommend them mutually. In this way the good begun in one place may perhaps be finished in another; only care must be taken that the removal of the poor be not made lightly and without a serious purpose, as is too often the case.

Nor should it be neglected to give recommendations to workmen who travel to perfect themselves in their calling, in order that they may be placed, as much as possible, in respectable houses with honest and Christian employers.

I. Organisation of Conferences.

Art. 8. — (1) The business of each Conference is administered by a President. One or more Vice-Présidents, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, who constitute the « Board » of the conference.

(2) There may be also in each Conference, if necessary, a Librarian, a Keeper of the wardrobe, or other officers.

Artice 8 enumerates the different officers of the Conferences, and it divides them into two categories — those who form the Board, to whom more particularly belongs the direction of the Conference, and those who fulfil certain accessory functions.

The Board of the Conference has, practically, a very great importance, particularly in such Conferences as are not under a Particular Council. It has to consider carefully the principal questions which belong to the business of the Conference, to prepare the matters which are to be submitted, in order to make the decisions clear, and to shorten discussions. Although the Rule does not require it, yet it is desirable that the meetings of the Board should be so frequent as to secure a real efficiency; but it is necessary to remark that, according to the spirit of the Rule, the Board has only to prepare the business for the Conference, to consider all projects carefully, and that it is for the Conference itself to decide, especially in the towns where a Particular Council is not in existence. To proceed otherwise would be often away all interest from its meetings.

ART. 9. — The President is elected by the Conference. The other officers are nominated by the President, with the advice of his Board. However, as is said further on, in a town where there is a Council of direction, the presidents and the vice-presidents of the conferences, as well as the other members who compose this Council, are appointed by the president of the Council of direction.

Two cases may present themselves for the nomination of the President of a Conference; one, where there is but a single Conference in a town, and other, where is a Particular Council acting as a link between several Conferences.

In the first case, the Conference elects its President itself, and it cannot be otherwise. It is to be observed that this election is not made for a limited period, but for an indefinite time. This arrangement has, in some instances, been the subject of criticism on the part of some Conferences; they have feared that thereby there would be placed for ever at the head of Conferences, Presidents unequal to their tasks, that, consequently, the progress of the Confernce would be impeded through it and that the poor would come to suffer by it. These fears have certainly some foundation, but the Council-General has always deemed them less serious than the inconveniences of frequent elections. It is rare, in the first place, that an annual election, unless it be a mere matter of form, should not be a cause of certain agitation, and that agitation may injure seriously the internal peace of the Conference. There might, besides, on account of

these elections, be formed in the heart of an assembly, formerly the most peaceful, parties, and little cabals ; preferences and antipathies might be engendered, and nothing could be more fatal to a work of charity. Then, is not the spirit of preservation and of permanence, neccessary for the direction of any work whatsoever; and, if a president knows that he is nominated for one year only, can he so easily undertake works of long duration, *the patronage of apprentices, the Holy Family*, etc? Perhaps his successor may lead the Conference in another direction, and that would be then for him a reason for attempting nothing. Finally, in a Christian work, where the offices are burdens and not distinctions, *Onera non numera*, if a president does really retard the progress of the work, are there not a thousand modes of charitably letting him know it? The experience of fifty years has many times proved that, without offending an honourable brother, it was possible to lead him thus to a retirement, which to him was but a rest long desired. For all these reasons, the Council-General has always opposed the system of annual elections, and, thanks to the docility which the Conferences have for its advice, this system has not been slow in disappearing.

The other officers of the Council are named in these Conferences by the President, with the advice of the Board. This mode of appointment appears better calculated to ensure unity in directon, and to prevent too frequent elections.

In the second case, that of several Conferences connected by a Particular Council, the nomination of the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of Conferences belongs to the President of that Council Article 31 says

that these appointments ought to be made by the President, with the advice of his Council. This arrangement has for its object to draw closer among the different Conferences the bonds of fraternity, and to maintain a unity of spirit by means of an appointment emanating from a common authority. It may occur, indeed, that in the heart of the same town, divergent tendencies may manifest themselves among different Conferences; that one, for example, should incline towards the mode of proceeding of a confraternity, another towards the usages of a mere benevolent society; that this one would be too rigorous in the admission of its members, that too indulgent. The nomination of the Presidents of Conferences by the President of the Council wears away all these differences, little by little, and gently, and succeeds, through selections prudently arranged between the President and hsi Council, in blending these shades of difference into one common spirit — that of the Society. Lastly, it is easier to weigh the peculiar fitness of such a candidate in a Council where a familiar intercourse is kept up, and where there are but few present, than in a Conference where there is greater publicity, and where every objection to the cohice proposed may take the appearence of a personality.

Finally, whatever may be the mode of appointment of the President, the importance of the selection cannot be too much insisted upon, whilst the President should never be in the Conference but as a kind of elder brother, the *Primus inter pares*, experience proves that *What a President is, so is the Conference.* In order that a President should discharge his duties adequately, it should be considered not so much whether he

enjoys a well-deserved position in the locality, or whether he is rich and generous, but much rather whether he possesses the personal qualities which are indispensable. Thus, above all, he must have *leisure* to interest himself in the Conference, for an honorary presidency is always a barren one; he should have *zeal*, which often makes leisure; he should also have *energy of mind* as well as *maturity of judgement* he should be animated with the *spirit* of the works, in order that he may know how to surmount the difficulties which the exercise of works of charity presents, instead of being frightened by them; he should have a *conciliatory spirit*, to prevent or to appease differences, and, in fine, that *piety*, that *lively faith*, which know how to spread abroad, and which grow strong because they draw down God's blessings.

The constant practice of the Society (with some exceptions, which are almost always temporary), has been to confer the Presidency of Conferences upon simple laymen. It is thus that the Society has been constituted, and has been approved of by the Holy See; also the Council-General has looked upon it as a duty only to admit into the Society those Conferences of which the President is a layman. If exceptional considerations have led it to abrogate this rule, it is always on the condition that the ecclesiastical President shall be replaced by a layman within a fixed period. But from the circumstance that the Presidency has not devolved upon ecclesiastics, it by no means follows that those amongst them who do us the honour of joining our ranks, not only as honorary members, but as active members, should not be received with the utmost

gratitude. This is a point which the circular of the 31st. May, 1846 treats of in the fullest manner.

ART. 10. — (1) The President directs the business of the Conference, receives and submits propositions, calls meetings, if necessary, and watches over the execution of the rules and decisions of the Society.

(2) In case of absence, he entrusts his duties to a Vice-President.

ART. 11. — (1) The Secretary prepares the minutes of the meetings.

(2) He keeps a registry of the names, professions, and addresses of the members, of the dates of their admission, and the names of those by whom they were proposed.

(3) He keeps an exact account of all the families visited. He makes diligent enquiry concerning those recommended for relief, so that the Conference may not, if possible, visit any family which is not worthy of its sympathy and support.

(4) He notes any changes that occur in the families visited, or in the members who visit them.

The President is, as it were, the soul of a Conference; but he should not however, absorb, through excess of zeal, the activity of the Conference in his own. It is well that he should watch over and superintend everything of importance, and have his share in all, through his advice at least; but it is not desi-

rable that he should over-burden himself, and take upon himself alone all the work, for he would in this way make his functions impossible for a successor somewhat more occupied, and he would destroy the zeal of the other members by thus always substituting his own for theirs.

When the President is absent, especially for some time, it should be understood that the Vice-President has all his powers, and *stand entirely in his place.* A Conference should never stand still for want of a member, and this would be the case if the members did not venture to do anything in the President's absence. It is therefore not alone his *right*, but it is a *Conscientious duty* on the part of the Vice-President to supply fully the place of the President when absent or prevented from attending, in order that, when the latter returns he may not find that all has been languishing for want of him.

This remark concerns not only the Conference alone; it is applicable also, for stronger reasons, to Particular, Central and Superior Councils, and, above all, to the Council-General. In an undertaking, we must always have that undertaking in view, not the men.

The functions of the Secretary deserve special mention, notwithstanding that they are of less importance than those of the President; for if the President has the whole direction upon his shoulders, the Secretary carries out the details. Upon his exactness or upon his negligence depends consequently a number of good things or little irregularities.

Thus, when the Secretary is absent or comes late, the minutes are either not read at all, or are not read

at the time fixed by the rule, which is, in fact, the most convenient time. When he does not keep an exact note of the admission of the members, of the adoption of families, of the names of visitors, the result is a grave irregularity; families, long forgotten, suffer from being neglected; there are others who receive double relief; and these inaccuracies greatly interfere with the regular business of the meetings.

Nothing would be more contrary to the usages of a society which is entirely voluntary, than finical habits, in imitation of the modes of proceedings of a public department. Thus the Council-General cannot be too careful in guarding the Conferences against everything which would have this stamp upon it, and to recommend them to do everything, simply, without voluminous registers or numberless forms; for otherwise the spirit of our Conferences would receive a serious injury. But simplicity in proceedings does not exclude order, quite the contrary; and precisely because things are done in a short time, they should be well arranged.

Such is the spirit in which a Secretary ought to understand his duties. Thus, the list of the poor should always be kept up to date; opposite to the name and address of each family, and of the ordinary relief which they may have been allowed, an entry should be made in a column of observations of the creditable circumstances which concern this family, the principal remarks made by the visitors, and of every extraordinary assistance which has been granted to them. Such a list would require scarcely a quarter of an hour weekly to keep up; and yet, it may be very useful for the proper guidance of the Conference, and specially for

new visitors, who would find in it valuable information as to the poor entrusted to them.

ART. 12. — The Treasurer has the care of the funds, and takes at each meeting an exact account of the receipts and disbursements.

This article is of greater utility than one would at first imagine and Conferences are requested to follow it to the letter; on the one hand, because by keeping the state of the treasury each time under the eyes of the members, it induces each of them to proportion his demands to its resources, and on the other, because it guards against errors. Conferences, then, will do wisely not to depart from the custom of a weekly account being rendered by the Treasurer, as has sometimes been done to save time. But what is of still more importance, is never to fall into arrear with the purveyors. Besides that, the price of provisions, and that of bread particularly, varies very often, and so if the rule were departed from, it might give rise to disputes; it is dangerous for the Conferences to allow debts to accumulate, and it may be, at some particular moment, a cause of great embarrassment. It is much better to pay ready money — as the surest and simplest way of proceeding.

The investment of funds, when a Conference has received any sum of money which exceeds the current expenditure, deserves also some attention. We do not speak of a perpetual investment of capital, which would be funded, and the interest alone drawn, a course which would be very contrary to the spirit and to annul the actual life of the conference, and to take

temporary investments, which after a good lottery or a fruitful sermon, are made for some months until the winter, with the double view of procuring for the poor some additional comforts, and of assuring the preservation of the capital. Nothing positive can be said here upon this question, but it seems to be prudent for the Conferences to invest in public rather than in private securities, and to select those of fixed in preference to those of fluctuating values. High rate of interest is of much less consequence than complete security of the capital, and in critical times the money of the poor must be compromised as little as possible, and its recovery should always be prompt and easy. Finally, the investment of unemployed funds is the business of the Conference, and without its vote the Treasurer cannot do it, under the penalty of pledging his own moral responsibility.

Some Conferences are in the habit of naming, at the Treasurer's request, a yearly committee for the verification of the accounts. This usage appears to be a very wise one, and the Treasurers ought to adhere to it, as it protects their responsibility. Nowadays, besides, it is of scarcely less importance to prove that one is correct as well as being so in fact.

ART. 13. — The Librarian collects instructive books adapted to the capacity of the persons relieved by the Conference, and he keeps an account of all books lent or bestowed.

ART. 14. — The Keeper of the wardrobe collects the clothes for the poor, and keeps a regular account of them.

The importance of a library for the poor, recognised as it has been from the origin of the Society, is still greater now than formerly. The duties of a Librarian are then very serious, and the Conference should support in every way in their power the brother who devotes himself to them. It seems natural that the Librarian should be entrusted with the distribution, at the meetings, of the short Readings (*petites lectures*), which it is so useful to have done continuously and regularly.

The wardrobe should be the object of the most particular care on the part of the Conference; for the poor are as often in want of clothes as of food, and to obtain them we must expend our trouble rather than our money. In the first place, the Conference must be often reminded of the wants of the wardrobe, a place always drawn upon, and above all others badly furnished; so, when an offer is made, we should avail ourselves of it quickly, and not let the occasion slip. When the clothing is brought together, there is a good deal of time required for repairing, and it is here that the help of pious ladies is most valuable for carrying out a host of details, which men do not understand. In fine, it is necessary at times, as for instance, in some towns, to organise searches in every house, to collect, with the assent of course of the proprietors, all the old lumber which is lying by in the garrets, from the old broken article of furniture or torn hangings, for which use would soon be found, to the pieces of linen so needful to the sick. The wardrobe may often cost very little, and yet be well filled, and then it is of immense service. For the sick, it provides old linen and changes; to the poor, who are in want of bedding, it affords the means of separating

children of different sexes. What a blessing is not a warm blanket, or a clean sheet, a dress, or a coat? It is often worth health, life itself, sometimes also the means of livelihood; for how many of the poor there are who cannot obtain situations for want of suitable clothing?

2. Order of the Meetings

Art. 15. — (1) The President opens each meeting with the prayer *Veni sancte spiritus* followed by the prayer, with the *Ave ria* followed by the *Prayer*, and the invocation of St. Vincent de Paul.

(2) A portion of some pious book selected by the President is then read. Each member is called upon in, turn to perform this duty.

(3) The prayer and spiritual reading should be gone through with the most serious attention, the spiritual good of its members being as much the object of the Society as the relief of the poor.

Prayer is an essential portion of the business of the meetings, and should never be omitted, as it brings to mind one of the distinctive characteristics of the Society. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a Catholic work, and to draw down the blessings of God upon its labours, it should be gone through without human respect, upon bended knees; for he would very badly comprehend the humility which the service of the poor requires who would be unwilling to bend his knee in public before his God.

It has become a pious custom, in almost all the Conferences, to say, before the invocation to St. Vincent de Paul, the *Ave Maria* and these three invocations « *Cor Jesu Sanctissimum Miserere Nobis* », « *Regina sine Labe Concepta, Ora pro nobis* », « *Sancte Joseph, Ora pro nobis*».

The spiritual reading should be gone through with attention, and should be neither too long nor too short, not too long, for fear of prolonging the meeting; nor too short, because the piety of the members should be nourished. The selection of the book from which the reading should be made, belongs to the President; but of course the book ought to treat only of Christian and charitable subjects. In a certain old Conference, it has become a habit, that any member who, in the course of his own reading, meets with some passages worth remarking and of a nature to edify his brothers, communicattes them to the President, and with his assent reads it. This custom is a very good one, and deserves to be extended.

The works most used among the Conferences, for the pious reading are, *The Holy Gospels*, the *Imitation of Christ*, the *Imitation of St. Vincent de Paul*, the *Introductioon to the devout life*. It is also indispensable to read now and then, or at least once a year, the whole of the Rules, the Circulars of the Council-General, and this Commentary.

ART. 16. — The Secretary reads the minutes of the preceding meeting. Each member is at liberty to make observations upon them.

The minutes ought to contain all that occurs of importance at the meetings, and particularly whatever

may serve as a precedent; but they should be drawn up as simply and as shortly as possible. They will thus be more to every one's taste.

ART. 17. — If it be necessary, the President announces the admission of candidates proposed at the preceding meeting, and invites their proposers to inform them of their admission.

ART. 18. — (1) The President then proclaims the names of the new candidates, should any such have been proposed. Members who have any observations to make in relation to the candidates, communicate such in wrinting, or verbally, to the President, in the interval between the meeting at which the names are announced, and that which follows. If no observations have been made, the admission of the member proposed takes place at the latter meeting.

(2) Each member will be careful only to introduce into the Society those persons who will edify their fellow members, or be edified by the Society, and who will endeavour to love their colleagues and the poor as brothers.

These two articles, which should be considered together, point out the essential *forms* to be followed in the admission of candidates. The points which they put most prominently forward, are the following :

Ist. The proposal ought to be made, in the first instance, to the President in private; for Article 18 lays it down that *it is the President who announces the names of the candidates who have been proposed.* The

Circular of the 14th July, 1841, explaining this passage, is to the following effect : — « Moreover, we request that before proposing a candidate, those who propose him should never fail to confer on the matter with the President who is specially charged with the direction and with the honour of the Conference »; and the Circular of the 1st. November, 1852, taking up the subject again, adds these reflections : — « It is easy to understand how wise are these directions, for, if those who propose a candidate, in place of speaking of the matter in private with the President, began, as we see it done too often, by proposing him publicly to the Conference, it would be much more difficult to prevent an admission which might be undesirable. If, on the contrary, the proposal is made always after an understanding with the President, it is to be presumed that is is done because it ought to be done. »

2*nd*. Every member is free to make observations upon the candidate; but these observations ought not to be made during the meeting. In public the discussion of any particular name, every hesitation, every question would assume the appearance of a personality. If the habit were adopted of making observations in this manner, unless there were grave objections to the candidate, each one would conceal his own opinion, would hold his peace, only to give way to his regret apart from the others; whence it would arise that, without the cordial consent of all, admissions would take place of some who should not be received, but whom one would shrink from objecting to publicly; so that, consequently, in the Conferences there would be an absence of unanimity and of cordial co-operation, and sometimes even defections would take place.

Now, what should be the course we ought to follow, if serious objections have been laid before the President? In such a case, the duty of the President is to have an explanation on the subject, in a free and perfectly cordial manner, with the proposing member, to induce him to withdraw the person proposed, if the opposition be serious and well founded. Nevertheless, it may occur that there might be differences upon that point between the President and the member who has made the proposal; in such a case the President will do well to consult his Board, or even that the Particular Council of the town, if there be one, and to support his position by their advice. It is then to be presumed that this mediatory opinion will be listened to, and that it will be easy to come to an understanding; but if, unfortunately, the difference of opinion should still continue, it can be put an end to only by a vote of the Conference — a final resort which is of very rare occurrence, and which ought always to be so.

But if no opposition arise, in that case which is the most usual, the President has not, according to Article 17, to call for a vote; he has simply to state that the proposed candidate has not been the subject of any observation, and to announce his admission. Open voting would produce serious inconveniences, and a ballot would be a solemn proceeding little in accordance with the simple habits of a Conference.

3rd. Besides the general conditions which we have enumerated, for the proposal of candidates, Article 18 mentions one specially, which is perhaps too little attended to; it says that *the member should edify the* Society and BE EDIFIED BY IT. This recommendation is very important, because, if persons are induced to

join the Conferences as members who do not find attractions in them, who come there just to get through a duty, and because they are constrained to it in some sort, zeal cannot but grow cool. «The first qualification» (as is very wisely stated in the Circular of the Ist. November 1847), «that a candidate ought then to possess on presenting himself for admission into a Conference is, to attach a very high value to the prosperity of the Society, not assuredly through pride, but through a deep feeling of gratitude towards God who has raised up in our age this plan, heretofore not thought of or practised, of succouring the poor, and at the same time of making those who visit them better».

4*thly*. At the birth of the Society, when a new member was admitted, it was usual for the President to address to him an exhortation explaining the spirit of our Conferences. Unfortunately this custom has not been continued, and in consequence of the multiplicity of admissions, it was difficult to put it in practice. But it cannot be too much insisted on that a kind welcome should be given to new-comers, that they should not be assigned to them in order to lead them into the Conference, that certain of the members should be even assigned to them in order to lead them into the practical business of our works; upon this their perseverance often depends. The President gives to the new member a copy of the *Manual* of the Society, and exhorts him to make himself perfectly acquainted with it by a frequent perusal. How much better and more quickly too would not the spirit of our members improve if they were careful to read the Rule, the Circulars, the facts connected with the Society? Instead of guessing at our customs and our rules, and sometimes arriving at

a very incorrect notion of them, they would become speedily and completely acquainted with them by a little reading.

Certain Conferences have believed that there would be some advantage in giving to their members certificates to attest that they belonged to the Society.

This measure offers many inconveniences in a Society numerous and wide-spread as that of St. Vincent de Paul. Besides the danger of the fabrication of false certificates, is not there still a greater danger to be apprehended of seeing these certificates preserved during all their lifetime by men who may have abandoned their Conferences, and who would hawk about with a personal, interested view, these titles which had been too lightly conferred? Then what are the advantages of these certificates? It is indeed not easy to say, for when a member travels or goes to another Conference, there are preferable ways to assure him of a welcome. For some time it was thought advisable to furnish him a letter from the President. But it sometimes happened that, member after having solicited admission into a Conference, obtained shortly after a letter from the President thereof a letter of recommendation to Conferences of another town, and used their recommendation for soliciting help and for their own profit.

In view of modern cosmopolitan habits, this procedure presents great inconvenience. In order to stop all possible abuse it has become the custom not to give the letter of recommendation. The President of the Conference to which the brother to be recommended belongs, will write to the Presidents of the Conferences which the brother in question proposes to visit or to attend, if he is personally acquainted wirth them. If

he does not know them, which most frequently happens, he will write to the Secretariat of the Soiety who will undertake all that is necessary.

5thly. It is well to call to mind that every member, upon entering the Society, can gain a Plenary Indulgence on the day of his admission, conformably to the Brief of the 10th. January, 1845, that is to say the day on which he takes his seat. It would be greatly to be desired that a member should never neglect this precious favour, which would certainly be for him the pledge of many other graces.

ART. 19. — The Treasurer announces the state of the funds and the amount of the collection made at the close of the preceding meeting, so that each member may proportion his demands for relief to the resources of the conference.

The spirit of the Rule, as may be perceived by the 19th Aricle, is never to allow the payments of the Conferences to fall into arrear, but also not to hoard up. It is in some sort the translation of that expression of our Sacred Books : « If thou hast much, give abundantly, but if thou hast little, give a little, and the little thou hast, give willingly. » The works of the Conferences being entirely optional, should exist from day to day; besides, nothing is more Christian than to trust to Providence, and to reckon on its nexhausible liberality, when the work is untertaken for God. To make a reserve, to have before us a disposable capital which we never touch, to lay out beforehand a budget, are proceedings essentially contrary to the spirit of our Society. When it has anything and it finds out a real

case of misery, it gives bountifully and with a generous heart; if it has nothing, it appeals to the charity of its members, to that of their friends, of the public; and up to this day, God has never permitted that this confidence should be deceived.

ART. 20. — (1) Tickets available for relief in kind, and which vary according to the requirements of the poor, are then distributed. (2) Each member is called upon in his turn by the president, and mentions aloud what he applies for, and for how many families. He gives when called upon to do so, detailed informaton about these families.

In some Conferences, the power, not entirely absolute but very extensive, of asking for his poor whatever relief tickets he may wish for, is left to each member. It would seem that this custom ought to be reformed; for the natural inclination which leads a man to be more moved with pity for the misery which comes directly under his own eye, the pleasure of giving to his poor more than on former occasions, a certain timidity, in fine, in the presence of reiterated importunities, easily lead members to swell their demands, and hence necessarily results an injury to the equitable distribution of relief; for when each member fixes at his own discretion the allowances for his own poor, it is not possible that he should not make his demands with more or less ardour, according to his character, and that inequalities, much to be regretted, should be established among the different families. It is, therefore, a prudent measure to entrust the classification of the poor to a Committee of Enquiry (or Visiting Committee), *always composed of*

the same members. These members visit all the families who ask to be adopted, and they suggest to the Conference their classification into certain categories, according to the degree of their necessities; then, once or oftener during each year, they revise the general list of the poor, after having made a special visit. The visitors are always listened to, when defending the interests of their poor, and in case of disagreement the Conference decides.

Here another point presents itself, apparently a secondary one, but which, however, deserves attention. Is it well that members who have been absent from a meeting should be able, in the interval between one meeting and another, to go to seek their relief tickets from the Treasurer?

The opinion of the Council-General has always been in the negative. They believe that the true interests of the poor, as well as that of the Conference itself, is opposed to this permission being conceded. The interests of the poor : — for the members ceasing to have a positive necessity for coming to the Conference to get their relief tickets, would more easily free themselves from assiduous attendance at the meetings, and the weekly collection would be greatly affected by this, even although there was a collecting box at the Treasurers, as has been sometimes proposed; the interests of the Conference : are opposed to this permission being quanted for, by absenting themselves frequently from the meetings, the members would certainly in time lose their and the taste for them.

As to the mode of distribution pointed out in Article 20, it has necessarily been modified by the force of circumstances in such Conferences as are pretty

numerous, as it would have taken up all the time of the meetings. Many Treasurers have adopted the habit of preparing beforehand the relief tickets of each member in an envelope, which is handed to him at once; and in this manner the distribution is carried out immediately and without loss of time.

On the other hand, that which ought not to be laid aside is the custom of asking members detailed information upon the situation of the families whom they visit. It is not, in point of fact, sufficient that religious improvement should take place among the poor; it is necessary that it should be talked of, lest the newcomers, not hearing anything said about it, should come to neglect it, and that even the old members should allow themselves to lose sight of it. Further, every member ought to announce immediately the death of any of his poor; the *De profundis* is recited for the deceased at the close of the meeting, and the Holy Sacrifice is offered up for him at a later period. If there be yet time, some members are appointed to accompany the body to the church, and to attend the funeral.

(3) The relief should be punctually given to the poor at their homes, befores the next meeting. But the members administering it may use their own discretion both as to the precise time, number, and manner of their charitable visits, and also as to the best means of introducing into these families the love of religion and the practice of their duties.

This recommendation is important. The families that are visited are often in actual distress. To put off

for a pleasure trip, for some affair of little importance, the *weekly* visit to be made to the poor, is an act of negligence deeply to be regretted, from which the families often suffer. We should never put off our visits beyond the time on which the poor are expecting us. Besides this punctuality need not be mathematical, and even, as a general rule, it would be wrong to give the poor the habit of counting upon help at a fixed hour, which would certainly drive out of their mind any idea of economy and foresight.

(4) Should a member ask for any rules to guide his conduct, or for advice in difficult cases, he is heard with attention and kindness, and receives from the President or any other member, such replies as their experience and charity suggest.

This paragraph recalls once more to visitors the aim of the Society in its relation with the poor; it is to make them better. Without this the Society of St. Vincent de Paul would become a purely human work, and consequently barren. The visitors will have them to seek for every possible means of instructing the poor upon their duties. Sometimes it will be by means of a kind word adressed to the child, that they will take the work in hand; sometimes by means of a good book, an almanack, a Short Reading (*petite lecture*), a pious image, or a crucifix. At other times it will be by means of some edifying reading made for some poor invalid, whom they will strive to instruct. The manner may be varied infinitely in the details, but in the end will never be accomplished but by devotion, affection, and particularly by means of prayer. Let us pray for the

conversion of our poor ; let us obtain prayers for them from pious souls; let us sacrifice something to this intention, and we may be sure of success. It was thus that the Saints acted, and it is one of the secrets of the conversions which they worked.

Of course, when a member consults the Conference upon a case of difficulty, he should take care that no inconvenience can arise from making it public; if that be so, he should consult the President in private.

ART. 21. — (1) If relief in money, clothes, or books be applied for, the ground for such application should be fully explained, and the Conferences should vote on the question.

(2) Should the case of distress be such that a grant of money is indispensable, and that relief in kind will not answer instead, the members receiving the money must take special care to watch diligently over the use made thereof.

So the distribution of relief in kind is the rule, and the exception a grant of money. The reasons for this custom are so obvious that it is useless to recall them.

Some Conferences have remarked that certain of their members had a stronger tendency than others to ask for the extraordinary relief to which the 21st. Article refers The result of this is, that without desiring, it, their poor are more favoured than others. To remedy this trifling abuse, the habit has been adopted of entering the extraordinary relief which has been granted upon the list of families opposite to the names of those who have received it; so that the Conference is not again put to the same expense for the same poor person without being fully aware of it.

ART. 22. — (1) After the allocation of the different sorts of relief, the members deliberate on the disposal of any situations they may be able to procure for the poor, on the plans for the relief of the distressed, and on the families to be visited by new members, or by those who wish to visit more.

(2) No family can be admitted on the relief roll of the Society without a previous statement of its wants, made either by the Secretary, or by such other member as may have been appointed by the President to cellect information. Before the vote of the conference, every member has full liberty to make any remarks upon the case he may think useful.

The adoption of families should be the subject of very serious attention on the part of the President and of the Conference. It concerns, in fact, the prosperity and the honour of the Society that all abuses arising in this way should be avoided, namely that women still young, *particularly if they live by themselves*, should not be visited, and that every precaution should be taken to avoid even the appearance of scandal. This principle has been laid down from the very commencement, and is again referred to in the preliminary considerations of the Rule; but the more the Conferences multiply, the more it is indispensable to hold firmly to this principle. For the poor are to be found everywhere, and when there is so great a choice among so much misery, we should connect ourselves only with those, the relief of whom is exempt from inconvenient circumstances, and cannot cause disedification.

Care must also be taken similarly to adopt only the poor who live in reputable houses. This rule may appear severe, but is it not a case to which the popular proverb may apply : « Charity well regulated begins at home? ».

It is also fit that prudence should be used with regard to poor persons subject to grave faults — drunards, persons of dissipated habits, or those living in a state of concubinage. These poor people ought not to be entirely excluded, unless they are in the category of those of whom mention has been made above; but they must not be visited except with the desire to correct them, and only so long as there is hope of effecting a cure. Otherwise, if relief were still continued to them, after all advice has been exhausted, it would be a cause of scandal for the honest poor, and it would give them grounds for believing, although erroneously, that the Society attaches no value to good morals and upright conduct. There is in this, therefore, a wise middle course to be followed between too great strictness and too much indulgence.

Finally care must be taken not to adop too large a number, regard being had to the number of visitors. Otherwise, if the members take charge of too many families, they would be led to visit them only in a hurried way, to do no more for them than just distribute alms, and to neglect spiritual relief, which cannot be given but during visits of some duration and entirely friendly in their character. Therefore the conferences ought to lay down as a rule for themselves, to adopt but just so many families as they can visit in a Christian spirit, and with the views of our holy patron. In fact it is our tradition not to visit

families temporarily, except in exceptional cases, but to « adopt » them, and not to leave them till they can do without us. It is the only way to gain influence over our poor and to work for their moral improvement.

But all is not done by adopting the poor; they must have visitors allotted to them. This duty is the special task of the President; for some member may be suitable for almost every family, and yet not succeed with certain of the poor; he may be too timid or too slow or too hasty, for exceptional characters. To some of the poor it is well to give a visitor who impresses them with the gravity of his manner, and even by the importance of his position; with others, on the contrary, success is to be had only by gaining their confidence by dint of perseverance and forbearance. There is, then, a two-fold study of the character of the visitors and of the poor, to be made by the President, and he cannot attach too much importance to it. With respect to the visitors, this labour will be easy to the President, who meets them each week; but with respect to the poor, it requires more trouble, because their number is much more considerable. To effect it, there are two means, between which the President can make a choice : either to make periodically at least once a year, the complete round of the families, or for himself to pay the first visits, for some weeks to the families newly adopted. Some Presidents have found leisure to carry out both plans at the same time; they cannot be too much congratulated upon their efficiency.

ART. 23. — Members leaving for a time, or for good, the place where the Conference meets, give notice to the President, who confides

to others the duties with which such members were entrusted.

The recommendation of this Article, although purely of detail, possesses real importance. Thus, if a member neglects to give intimation of his departure, his poor or his works may be abandoned : if he forgets to acquaint the President personally of it, or if he himself gives charge to another member, either of his poor or his works, the distribution of the families by the President, which we have just mentioned, may be disturbed, or the works would not perhaps be entrusted to the brother to whom they would be most suited. In either case, the good order of the Conference would be hindered, particularily if the circumstances were of frequent recurrence.

Let us add, that it is very well that the members who go away should draw up a detailed report upon the condition of their poor, which would enable those who replaced them to understand better and sooner the characters, the necessities, and the misery of these poor. Some brothers have also, upon such occasions, the praiseworthy custom of giving to their Conference a more considerable sum as alms, to represent them in the collections in which, during their absence, they cannot share, and to help the Conference in supporting its poor. This practice cannot be recommended too strongly.

ART. 24 — The Conference then considers any observations that may be made with a view to its interests, its increase, and to the proper distribution of its relief.

This part of the meeting ought not to be negelcted, because the Conferences would readily degenerate and fall into monotony were they to occupy themselves exclusively with material questions, and not to give a little time to such as are general. There are two dangers to be shunned : the first — under pretext of being engaged upon more exalted interest, to allow themselves to get into speechifying, into dissertations upon charity, into theoretical discussions which would be quite opposed to the simplicity of our meetings; the second — to restrict themselves to what concerns the Conference exclusively. It cannot be too often remembered that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is one, and, in order that this unity may be maintained, it is well that the Conference should converse often about such things as occur of an edifying nature in other Conferences — that they should endeavour to imitate them and turn them to account, so as not to fall into apathy and torpor. Thus, it is very suitable to select that part of the meeting when the attendance is greatest to give an account to the Conference either of whatever has occurred of importance at the Particular Council of the town, if there be one, or of the general advice contained in the monthly *Bulletin* of the Society, or of the interesting Reports of other Conferences. It is also the most opportune moment for reading the circulars of the Council-General, in a deep knowledge of which, the members are often so deficient. Sometimes, all these documents are left to rest in the archives of the Conference, that is to say, in the dust.

It will be well, also, from time to time, to read, at this period of the meeting, some profitable report upon any special work of the Conference, with the view of

exciting interest, and of constantly stimulating zeal, which is, alas, so ready to flag in every human undertaking.

ART. 25. — (1) At the close of the meeting, and before the prayer, the Treasurer makes the collection, to which each member contributes an offering proportioned to his means, but always in secret. Those who cannot spare time for the service of the poor, try to increase the amount of their pecuniary contributions.

The collection should not be made merely *for form's sake* ; it ought always to be done very seriously, and every one is bound to examine himself before God, in his soul and conscience, whether the sacrifice he makes to the poor is in proportion to his means. Alms-giving, in fact, is not to the Christian a simple counsel — it is a rigorous duty ; and whilst it may be discharged otherwise than by the collection at the Conference, and whilst a portion (of the extent of which every one can alone be the judge) ought to be reserved for other works, and especially for those of his own parish, it is right that every brother of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul should, within the bosom of his Conference, discharge this precept generously and liberally. Otherwise, how could he ask of others, if he has not begun by being himself the first to give? How, above all, can he ask of God to bless his labours, if he has not deserved that blessing by a truly adequate self-sacrifice?

The collection, then, ought to be a serious act, but it ought also to be a secret one : and nothing would be more opposed to the spirit of the Society than to stimu-

late its members to considerable donations by the attraction of publicity. Thus a newly formed Conference had thought with a very laudable intention, that the amount of its collections would be increased if they were made upon a plate, so as to allow each one's offering to be seen; and it sought for the opinion of the Council-General upon it. The latter were unanimous in condemning this practice. Thus, too, other Conferences have sought to replace the weekly collection by an assessment made upon the members, either according to a rate fixed beforehand, or according to each one's means. The Council-General has likewise been at all times opposed to a tendency in this direction. Besides the fear that an assessment upon a low scale would injure the prosperity of the treasury, and that an assessment at a high rate would keep away many good Christians of small means, yet zealous, it was most of all to be feared that the secrecy of the collection would be violated. In Conferences, there ought to be no difference of rank or fortune; this is one of the most certain causes of their success. Now, the less opulent should not be exposed to blush at the smallness of their alms, nor the more wealthy be tempted to grow proud of the superiority of their donations. If anywhere Christian equality should be preserved, it is in the presence of charity. Nevertheless, in some country Conferences, it has been permitted that gifts in kind may be made by members as their contribution to the collection. This departure from the rule, which yet does not prevent a collection, has arisen from the nature of the circumstances.

(2) The collection is intended for the use of the families visited, but the members should

not neglect any other means that may present themselves of increasing the funds of the Conference.

At the commencement of the Society, the collections were almost the only resource of our Conferences; at present, they still are one of the most considerable sources of revenue, and they amount, on an average, to the half or more of the total receipts. This continuance of resources personal to, and furnished by, the Members themselves is a most happy sign; but, as the Rule says, the Members should not neglect any other means that may offer of increasing the funds. These means vary according to localities and customs; here, it is a charity sermon ; there, lotteries ; elsewhere, bazaars or sales almost every where subscriptions solicited, extraordinary donations procured. But what must not vary, are the principles which should govern the collection of these resources.

First, and above all, there must be intense zeal to keep up the treasury of the poor. Often there are numerous attempts towards this end, there are refusals to be endured, sometimes even unpleasantness to be borne. A brother of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul ought not to allow hinself to be daunted, provided, of course, that he has not exceeded the limits of propriety. When he sees closely the misery of so many families, when his heart is sensibly affected by their privations, their nakedness, and more than all by their spiritual destitution, he ought not to let himself be checked by some refusals, he ought not to fear being importunate ; the pleasure of solacing these miseries well deserves being purchased by some annoyances.

Yet if there must be zeal, in order not to lose through our own fault any occasion of increasing the patrimony of the poor, this zeal must not end in too human an attachment to material resources. In a Christian work money is never more than a secondary thing : what is more important than all else is devotedness — desire for the salvation of souls. Hence arise two results. The first is, that if the treasury does not fill to the measure of our wishes, we must not be grieved at it, nor, above all, must we be discouraged, but, on the contrary, we must persevere more than ever the second is, that to procure money we must never resort to modes which are not entirely of a Christian character. Nothing is, in fact, more fatal than to pursue a praiseworthy end by means which are not free from reproach, or to wish to accomplish a Christian work by ways contrary to religion. Consequently, there should be no balls for Conferences, no theatrical representations.

The Council-General has been often consulted about the interpretation which sould be given to that interdiction of « theatrical representations ». This is the summary of its answers.

1. Concerts, musical afternoon or evening parties, may be tolerated, provided that the text of the « interludes », « songs » or « Monologues » has been examined beforehand by the President of the Conference or by a member whom he has designated as his delegate.

2. Dramatical representations are only authorised on condition that they will not take place in a theatre and that the plays do not admit of women's parts.

We must equally avoid those lotteries (1) where cupidity is stimulated by the allurement of gain, where recourse is had to speculation to bring in funds, and also all other means repugnant to simplicity or humility.

Everything must be modest, Christian, in order not to attract too much the eyes of the world, and not to alienate the blessings of God.

ART. 26. — The meeting closes with the « Prayer to Saint Vincent de Paul » and with the prayers « Pro benefactoribus nostris » and « Sub tuum praesidium ».

A large number of Conferences have adopted the custom of preceding the prayer to St. Vincent de Paul by an invocation to St. Joseph. This pious custom may now be almost considered the rule.

The custom is also established in some Conferences of reciting at the close of the meeting the prayer *For the use of the members of the Society* (2), which is to be found in the Manual. It cannot be doubted that this would be a source of grace for the Conferences, and it is desirable that the members individually, no less than the Conferences as a body, should frequently recite this prayer.

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(1) This prohibition is not applicable to lotteries where the tickets are distributed without publicity and by trustworthy persons, and where the prizes are of too little value to allure subscriptions by the hope of gain.

(2) An indulgence of 300 days is attached to the recitation of this prayer.

CHAPTER II

OF PARTICULAR COUNCILS

When several Conferences are established in the same town, Article 4 states that they are to be united by a Particular Council.

The increase of members in the Conferences is certainly a very great benefit, and every member should labour actively towards it. Yet, there is a point beyond which this organization leads to serious inconveniences. Then the meetings lose somewhat of their intimacy. In order to prevent confusion and disorder they fall into the opposite extreme. A Conference is then no longer a place of meeting for Christian friends; it is an assembly of men who deliberate gravely; morever, zeal greatly relaxes in the same proportion as numbers increase, since each member depends upon the other, and individual interest diminishes. It is therefore most dangerous for a Conference to become too numerous; the spirit of simplicity, of fraternity, of cordiality may be wrecked. Thus it has been early considered as necessary for Conferences that have reached this point, to divide into several Conferences, and experience has justified such an opinion; but this division was not intended to lead to a schism, nor even to an isolation, nor to an entire severance of the branches of the original Conference. It is for this object that provision has been made by the formation of Particular Councils, which, while allowing the individuality of each Confe-

rence to continue nevertheless combines the common strength of all.

Thanks to this combination, we have been enabled to multiply the number of members in important towns in a manner that could not have been expected, as well as the number of the poor visited, of the funds collected, and the good accomplished. Besides we may thus succeed in establishing Conferences in every parish and obtain with the unity of direction in important matters, a great freedom of action for each Conference in the details of its operations.

The separation of one Conference into several Conferences is the most frequent case where there is occasion for the creation of a Particular Council; yet sometimes it happens in towns which are rather extensive, or in suburbs which are attached to them, that a second Conference is organized entirely outside of the first. This does not make it the less necessary to bind these Conferences together by a common Council, but it should be observed that the Council-General, before pronouncing the aggregation of the second Conference always consults with the original Conference, in order to be well assured that they are acting harmoniously, and that the formation of a new centre is caused by charity, and not by any unfortunate spirit of rivalry.

Lastly, we must observe that this institution, which was only applied at first to Conferences of the same town or its immediate suburbs, has been extended recently to country conferences. The boundary of the jurisdiction of the Particular Councils is in such case fixed by the Council-General at the time of their institution; for this limitation varies according to the relations, the proximity, and the necessities of the Con-

ferences grouped together. These Councils are a protection against the dangers of isolation among Conferences scattered through the country, whose very weakness makes it necessary that they should support one another, even more than those in towns.

ART. 27. — The Particular Council of a town consists of a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, of all the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Conferences in the town, and of the President and Vice-Presidents of works in which all are interested.

The composition of Particular Councils has been framed, as may be seen above, with the double view of combining unity of direction, and the free action of the Conference for their works Thus, there is at the head a Board, whose members need not belong to any Conference, and which can thus tend to encourage them all in the same degree; then, besides this Board there are the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of each Conference, and the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Special Works. So all interests are protected in order that the decisions arrived at may be accepted more freely by all; and all the works are represented in order that the absence of any one may not involuntarily cause its interest to be neglected.

With regard to the *Special* Works, as the Rule calls them, they are those which, for their full development, require the cooperation of all the Conferences. These works alone are represented in the Particular Councils, and not the works of this or that Conference, which have the President of the Conference for their natural guardian.

It is well to note, by the way, that when the article speaks of « a» *Vice-Président*, here, as in sundry articles, that does not prevent others from being named if there be a real necessity for them; so also as to Vice-Secretaries and Vice-Treasurers. Nevertheless, it would be very much opposed to the spirit of the Society to multiply, beyond what is necessary, the number of officers, in order to foster self-love and vanity.

ART. 28. — The Particular Council is charged with those works and important measures which interest all the conferences of the town.

This article determines plainly the functions of Particular Councils. Thus, if the matter in question be concerning a work entirely of detail, or the internal arrangement of relief in a Conference, the Particular Council has nothing to do with it, since that does not affect all the Conferences of the town. If it is a question, which concerns the Society at large — if it is a measure, the result of which will not be confined to the Conferences of the town, but may extend over all the others, it does not lie, strictly speaking with the Particular Council to come to a decision on the matter; it has only to offer advice, leaving it to the Council-General to give a definite solution. But when a question arises upon a measure that interest *all* the Conferences of the town, and which *concerns them only*, it is then that the action of the Particular Council comes into operation, and that it has the right to adopt positive decisions. Without entering into details of these measures, it is certain that they are of frequent occurrence. Thus, where new Conferences are formed, it is for the Particular

Council to fix their limits. When some important works are proposed, it is for it to decide upon whether there is occasion for them, how they should be proceeded with, etc. When a Conference departs from the Rule, it is for it to remind the Conference of the Rule, and by its advice to lead it back to its observance.

ART. 29. — (1) It decides on the administration of the common fund.

(2) This fund is maintained by all donations not made expressly to any of the conferences. Collections made at the general meetings of the town, and by the contributions which the Presidents bring to each council in the names of their respective Conferences.

(3) This fund is intended to meet the expenses of works of the town, and to support the poorest Conferences.

The administration of the common funds of the Conferences is one of the functions of the Particular Council. These funds are destined, as the article says, to meet the works of the town and to support the poorest Conferences. This destination shows their real utility, and proves their great value. Misery never is, in fact, distributed equally amongst the different quarters of a town, and it is very right that the more abundant resources of the better-circumstanced Conferences should aid the distress of the others. It is one of the applications of true charity which should animate the members of the Society, and the best way to show that they all act but with one heart and one soul. This is the place to add that the funds of the Particular Council, as

well as those of the Conferences, ought always to be employed upon the works of the Society. « We have been asked », says the Circular of December 1st, 1842, « if it be permissible to apply some of the funds received as donations or through the collections at Conferences, to any other charitable purpose than the works specially adopted by them. It appeared to us that this ought not to be done; that it would be, first misinterpreting the intentions of the donors; that, secondly, the result of such permission would be to embarrass considerably the works which we have undertaken. By wishing to do everything, we should end, in fact, by doing nothing. A charitable society, which does not know how to limit itself, is soon exhausted. Because we have selected certain works, we have not entered upon an engagement to devote ourselves to all. Pardon me, Sir and dear Brother, if in this I appear to restrain the effects of your zeal; but we must be wise with soberness, and it is to render your efforts more efficient and more lasting, that I venture these counsels, dictated by prudence which may savour of timidity. »

The supply of the funds of the Council presented a two-fold difficulty; of drawing too much to itself, or of being insufficient. If the resources of the Conferences had been too much concentrated in the common fund, their zeal in collecting funds would certainly have been diminished. It is, perhaps, a weakness to wish to expend, through our own hands or through our Conference, the money which we have procured, and to put forth so much the more ardour in its collection, as we shall have a larger share in its distribution; but this weakness is too natural to man, not to be taken into

account. If, on the other hand, too limited resources have been provided for it, the common fund would have been without an object. It appears that the Rule steers safely between these two dangers.

Thus each Conference is exclusively the proprietor of the funds which it collects:

By the weekly collections,

By subscriptions,

By donations made to it,

By the local resources which it procures within its own area, and which vary according to local customs.

The Council centralizes:

The donations made to the Society in the town and not to any particular Conference,

The funds arising from lotteries, general collections, organized, not in a single parish, but in the entire town,

The contributions of Honorary Members (Art. 55),

The collections made at the general meetings of the town,

And the offerings of each Conference.

It should to be remarked that this limitation is necessarily, somewhat variable and elastic, and that, in the spirit of the Society, there ought to be made under this head between the funds of the Council and those of the Conferences, certain concessions according to the exigencies of the occasion. Further, the offerings of each Conference are now fixed generally at a certain per-centage upon their funds. It seemed useless, in fact, to renew a vote upon this matter at every meeting of the Conference. In Paris, the Conferences vote the tenth of their funds; in other towns, a different proportion has necessarily been adopted.

ART. 30. — The President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, constitue the Board, to which belongs the direction of the current business.

Just as in simple Conferences, this Board is of great importance; not only does it prepare the subjects for deliberation and thus shorten them, but it also expedites a crowd of small details, in which the President is very glad to receive advice, but which are not important enough to demand calling an extraordinary meeting. So that nothing is done precipitately, and nevertheless small matters, which are the most numerous, are not protracted indefinitely. In works of charity, if it be of consequence to do them well, it is also necessary to do them quickly.

If the interest of the Society and the management of the business make it necessary, the members of the ordinary Council or Board may ask other members to join them.

ART. 31. — The President is nominated by the council, with the advice of the Conferences. On the first occasion, he is nominated by all the conferences together.

The Presidents nominates the Presidents and the Vice-Presdents of Conferences and of Special Works, as well as the Vice-Presidents, the Secretary, and the Treasurer of the Particular Council, taking the advice of his Council upon all these nominations.

This article clearly defines the occasions and the mode of nomination of the different officers and mem-

bers of the Particular Council. One question only has been raised, viz., can the Council nominate the President, *after obtaining the opinion of the Conferences, but still contrary to that opinion?* and can the President nominate the officers whom he is charged with selecting, *after the advice of his Council, but still contrary to that advice?* The Council-General being consulted upon this question, were of opinion, that *in principle* the Particular Council, as well the President, could proceed with the nominations which belong to them; but that, in a work of charity, we must adhere less to a strict interpretation of texts than to circumstances. Now, in fact, it is certain, that a Council could not impose a President upon the Conferences of a town *in spite of them*, and that a President could not impose upon his Council members whom the majority of that Council would *formally* reject. Here charity solves the difficulty, as also it will prevent its being raised, for, in order that good works may be possible, there must be an intimate union among all; and great danger to the Society would arise upon the day when any would wish to act in virtue of rights and of prerogatives and not rather with a whole-hearted confidence.

What is said as to the nomination of the President of the Particular Council does not apply to the cities in which the Council-General, Superior Councils or Central Councils sit. The Presidents of these several Councils being *by right* Presidents of the Particular Council of the town where they are established (article 44 of the General Rule, 8 of the Regulations for Superior Councils, 7 of the Regulations for Central Councils), the Particular Councils should abstain from electing a President and should await the election of

the President of the Council placed in a higher degree by the constitution of the Society.

ART. 32. — The President of the Particular Council directs its proceedings, receives and submits propositions, and calls meetings when necessary. He presides at the general meetings of the district.

The Rule does not define the periods of meeting of the Particular Councils; and it could not do so, for what would suit in one town is often not expedient in another; thus, at Paris, a necessity has been felt for the Particular Council of the City to assemble every eight days; and these repeated meetings have answered very well. In other places, on the contrary, fortnightly or monthly meetings are amply sufficient. The necessities of each town must, then, be taken into account; but it is desirable, with the exception of the Councils which unite rural Conferences, that the meetings should not be held at a greater interval than a month, since a Council must be active in order to render the services required of it.

ART. 33. — The Secretary prepares the minutes of the Souncil. He keeps a register of the names, christian names, professions, and addresses of the members of all the Conferences of the town, with the dates of their admission, and the names of their proposers. He also registers the native places of those who have not a fixed domicile in the town.

The point of detail which the 33rd Article enumerates ought to be carefully observed; and expe-

rience has proved that none of these particulars is superfluous Secretaries of Particular Councils ought, then, to be careful in this matter, just as Secretaries of Conferences should apply themselves to keep correct and full lists of members and of the poor.

ART. 34. — The Treasurer has charge of the common fund of the town.

It follows that it is to the Council that he accounts. It is well that, as in the Conferences, these accounts should be audited yearly.

ART. 35. — The Conferences are represented in their Particular Council by their Presidents and Vice-Presidents. The Presidents of *Special Works* attend there to watch over the interests of these works. Each makes reports when invited to do so by the President of the Council.

Thers is nothing to point out here but the final provision in this Article, and to insist upon the usefulness of reports being made. These reports, although they ought always to be made in a simple style, yet keep interest thoroughly alive; they prevent meetings from being dull or monotonous; they afford occasion to Councils to probe to the quick the Conferences and the works of the town, to give advice, to rectify usages that are defective, to extend such as are useful, and thus to form, by the force of example alone, a unity of heart and of mind among the different Conferences.

CHAPTER III

THE COUNCIL-GENERAL

ART. 36. — The Council-General is composed of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and of several councillors.

ART. 37. — (1) The Council-General is the bond of all the Conferences—it maintains the unity of the Society, it watches over whatever can promote its prosperity.

(2) In this respect it adopts the course which it judges most useful.

The Council-General is the centre of the entire Society. It aggregates Conferences, institutes the Councils of different degrees, fixes their limits, pronounces, if there be occasion and in serious cases, the dissolution of Conferences and of Councils, adopts general decisions which extend to the whole Society, interprets the General Rule, and directs all the Conferences through its correspondance, its circulars, and the *Bulletin*.

The Council-General grants *Letters of Aggregation* to the Conferences and *Letters of Institution* to the Particular, Central and Superior Councils. Those Councils which do not possess their *Letters of Institution* will do well to apply for them.

The Council-General also grants *Letters of Union* to Patronages and works of perseverance which desire to connect themselves with the Society of St. Vincent de

Paul and so to participate in the Indulgences which this union confers. It thus forms a religious bond between the Society and the persons who carry on those works. Nevertheless, they can only acquire the title of members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul by participating in one of its Councils or in a Conference.

The existence of the Council-General goes back to the time when the Society was composed of several Conferences; and its action has been successively developed according as the general interests of the institution have increased and have become of greater importance. The Circular of December, 1837, traces its history. The Rule devotes a chapter to its organization.. (See, with regard to the enumeration of the members of the Board, the remark inserted at article 27).

ART. 38. — (1) It decides upon the distribution of the central fund.

(2) This fund is maintained by donations made to the Society, by collections made at the general meetings, and by contributions from the Conferences and Councils towards the general expenses of the Society.

Notwithstanding the strictest economy, it is not possible that the Society should not have some general expenses; every individual Conference, every Council necessarily has some; the Council-General, charged with representing the whole Society, with corresponding with its different branches spread all over the world, cannot escape this obligation, and of course feels it in a still greater degree. Hence the creation of a central fund ; but it is our Tradition to cut

down these expenses to what is strictly necessary, to do everything with simplicity, and, consequently, economy, and to be sacredly sparing of the money of the poor in respect to everything which does not go *directly* to their relief. The spirit of the Society would be deeply injured, and its success, perhaps, be compromised, on the day when these habits should be relinguished.

The 38th article places the annual offerings of each Conference and of each Council among the resources of the fund of the Council-General. It is but just that the Conferences of Paris should not bear alone such expenses as relate to the whole Society, and that *each* Conference, having its share in the general expenditure, should have its share, too, in the means of providing for it. Some Conferences have of themselves decided that they would adopt, as the base of their annual contribution, the hundredth-part of their receipts; but, whatever may be the gratitude of the Council-General for that decision, on this subject nothing is prescribed by the Rule, nor even demanded by the Council-General; these gifts are entirely optional, and it appears that the more they are spontaneous, the more valuable they become.

The purpose of the fund of the Council-General is not merely to defray the expenses of correspondence and of administration. It ought, especially, to extend a helping hand to poor Conferences, for which temporary assistance is eminently useful. Every year the Council-General makes grants, which are unfortunately insufficient, either to Conferences which are organized in poor localities, and to which a small remittance of money is a valuable encouragement, or

to those which, after existing for a long or short time, are passing through a financial crisis. Thus, many Conferences have been supported, upheld, preserved perhaps from the inefficiency into which they were about to fall. Left alone, they would have succumbed ; but, feeling themselves sustained, they have regained courage, and they have imparted it to the poor whom they relieved, and to the rich who could give them aid.

But occasions arise of so serious a nature, that the fund of the Council-General, which is always very inconsiderable, cannot succeed in affording a remedy for them. Thus, after inundations during famine and epidemics, the wretchedness rises to such proportions that the united efforts of all the Conferences are required to bring some remedy for the evil. In such circumstances the Council-General first gives its own little contribution, and then makes an appeal to the Conferences, either a general appeal, if the misery be excessive or one limited to certain countries, if the misery be confined within a certain radius. There is cause to thank our good God for the result of these appeals, for they have been always received in the most charitable and the most fraternal spirit.

These general demands made from Conferences must be confined to very exceptional cases ; for recourse can only be had to these exceptional methods if used with great discretion. Furthermore they must be made by the Council-General alone . If there were no such rule and the decision on the necessity on such demands were left to individuals, there would the so many that disorder would be the result.

The consequence of this (and perhaps it is not useless to recall it to mind) is that no Conference ought, *of its own accord and by itself* to transmit lottery tickets, circulars for subscriptions, requests for money, to the Conferences at large. In the district of a Particular, Central, or Superior Council, it can be done within that area *with the assent of that Council;* but outside of that area a general application can be made only through the intervention of the Council-General. This it at once the way to make important subscriptions succeed, and to prevent others.

Art. 39. — The members of the Council-General are nominated by the President, with the advice of the Council.

According to an old custom, confirmed by a decision of the Council-General, under date of November 24th, 1851, it is for the Council-General to decide if there be occasion to nominate new members. When that decision is in the affirmative, the President-General, after having taken the advice of the Council, nominates the new members of the Council. (See on this subject the commentary given upon Article 31. The same principles are applicable here).

No figure has been fixed for the number of members of the Council, since the necessity may vary according to circumstances, and with the increase of the Society it may be useful to call upon more fellow-workers ; but, according to the spirit of the rule, no more than the number of members that is really necessary should be introduced into the Council. It has always appeared that these duties ought to be active, and not simply

honorary, and that if the members were too numerous, it would be less easy to preserve the necessary unity of purpose and of direction. As a matter of fact, the number of the members of the Council-General has been, for many years, between twenty and twenty-five.

The members of the Council-General are chosen, as a general rule from among the Presidents or members of Conferences who have rendered most service to the Society, and who can devote most time and intelligence to its general interest ; yet the Council-General has always reserved to itself the liberty of calling into its body persons remarkable by reason of their piety and their love of good works, persons who honour our Society by coming to give their co-operation to it. But, it should be understood, that such a case ought to be exceptional, being caused by circumstances and by the qualities of the future member.

ART. 40. — (1) When a President-General of the Society is to be appointed, the Council-General is convened by the Vice-President This meeting is preparatory, its sole business being to deliberate as to the person who may be considered eligible for the office. If the former President be living, he is requested to designate some person whom he thinks it would be proper to select.

(2) When the Council has deliberated upon one or more names, it adjourns for two months. In the interval, the proceedings of this preparatory meeting are made known to the Pre-

sidents of the particular Councils (1), who consult their colleagues, and to the Presidents of the Conferences, who consult thier respective Boards, or even the Conferences over which they preside: all the Presidents transmit their opinions to the Council-General, and according to these opinions the Council-General makes the election; an exact minute of which is recorded.

(3) While the election is pending, all the members of the Society offer up, either in private or at their meetings, a special prayer to God, the *Veni Creator*, that His Spirit may enlighten the choice they are about to make.

The article indicates sufficiently the mode of election of President-General, and there is no necessity to go into detail: the important point is to remind the conferences of the necessity for prayer while that selection is being carried out; for the election is always a serious event in the Society, and the grace of God cannot be too much implored, so that a good choice may be made, and that the candidate nominated may be worthy of the laborious charge to which he is called.

ART. 41. — The President-General convokes extraordinary meetings; he presides at the General meetng as well as those of the Council-General.

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(1) At that period the term Particular Council meant all the Councils other than the Council-General. This is evident from the actual terms of the Brief of His Holiness Gregory XVI of the 12th August 1845; *Consilia particularia provinciarum sive urbium.*

ART. 42. — The Secretary-General keeps a register of the names, christian names, professions, addresses, and dates of admission of members ; also the Boards of the Councils or Conferences, and of the places, days, and hour of the meetings.

(2) He prepares the minutes of the meetings of the Council-General, and of general meetings.

(3) He draws up the annual report on the works of the Society.

(4) He is charged with the general correspondence with the Presidents or Secretaries of the several Councils or Conferences.

(5) He keeps the archives of the Society.

Owing to the growth of the Society it would be actually impossible for the Secretary-General to keep a general register of all the members, but the names of the members of the boards of the Conferences are to be mentioned every year in the statistical tables.

It is unnecessary to mention that the correspondence ought to be deliberated on, with the President-General or Vice-President-General delegated for that duty.

ART. 43. — The Treasurer-General has charge of the funds. He keeps a regular account of the receipts and disbursements, and submits his accounts to the Council-General.

ART. 44. — If the President-General himself cannot preside at the Council of Paris, he appoints a member of the Council-General to do so. He also, on the recommendation of the

Secretary-General appoints several members of the Council-General to the office of Vice-Secretaries.

Article 44 lays down a useful principle, one applicable in all cases where two Councils — as a General-Council and Particular Council, a Superior Council and a Particular Council, a Central Council and a Particular Council, etc., exist together in the same town ; namely, that a member of the Council which is the highest in authority, either the President or a member delegated *ad hoc* by the President, should always be the one to preside in the Council of lower rank. Undoubtedly, bickerings and discussions about pre-eminence are little to be apprehended in a meeting for charitable purposes; but it would be so grievous to have them raised that they must be avoided as much as possible, and the concentration of the Presidency of the two Councils in the same person is one of the most effectual means of preventing discussions and chances of offence being taken.

CHAPTER IV.

GENERAL MEETINGS

Something has been said already of General Meetings and of their utility : — it is now time to study their spirit and details more closely.

General meetings are the assembling together of many Conferences, where several of them exist in the same town, or even the assembling together of the active and honorary members of the sole Conference of the town.

Many times Isolated Conferences have thought that they could not hold general meetings except by uniting themselves to some Conferences of the neighbouring localities, and that it would be impossible for them to hold general meetings by themselves alone. This notion is quite opposed to the practice of the Society which regards as a general meeting every more formal assembly, where, in the presence of the members, both active and honorary, and of the benefactors of the Conference, an account is given of the good works carried out, and of those which are contemplated. It would, moreover, be very unfortunate that it should not be so ; for, by omitting the general meeting, the Mass of the festival days would, perhaps, be omitted, the members would cease to meet for the purpose of praying together, so as to encourage each other in piety ; or, at least, if they did not give up the pious meetings, they would lose the Plenary Indulgences of the Four Festivals of the Society, which cannot be obtained but upon the double condition of communion and of assisting at the general meeting. — (Brief of January 10th, 1845. — See the Circular of November 1st, 1849.)

Now it is beyond doubt that four yearly meetings present some difficulties in small towns; that it is not easy to collect together four times a year some members of the clergy, some persons strangers to the daily works of the Conferences, in order to lay before them results of little consequence; for this reason the Council-General has not ceased, for many years past, to recommend to neighbouring Conferences to make arrangements for holding general meetings in common : sometimes in one town, sometimes in another; it is partly for this reason, also, that it insists upon the organization of Particular

Councils by means of which this part of our Rule can be more easily carried into operation.

General Meetings are, in fact, very useful for reviving zeal; they interest the honorary members and the benefactors in the work maintained by their co-opération ; they afford the opportunity of speaking to them of the poor, and of obtaining for the latter more powerful assistance; they form, too, for the active members, an occasion for reviewing the whole of their works, and of seeing how they could be improved. In very point of view they are, then, useful, and in towns where there are many Conferences, they are necessary in order to keep up mutual relations. Yet care must be taken that they do not degenerate into mere formal meetings, and be made an occasion for speeches and eloquent displays, but that they remain what they ought always to be, a family meeting, somewhat more numerous than is usual, but ever humble, ever Christian, and full of simplicity.

ART. 45. — (1) General meetings are held every year, on the 8th of December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin ; on the first Sunday of Lent ; on the Sunday of the good Shepherd (1) (the anniversary of the translation of the relics of saint Vincent de Paul) ; and on the 19th of July, the feast of our Patron Saint (2).

(1) The second Sunday after Easter.

(2) See art. 57, the modifications made by the brief of March 18th 1859, and by the Rescript of 30 th January 1888 as to the days on which some of these feasts may be celebrated.

(2) The President is empowered, moreover, to call extraordinary general meetings.

The dates fixed by the Rule, for the general meetings ought to be scrupulously observed; and it would be very much to be regretted if Isolated Conferences believed they could alter them. Is it not, in fact, touching to think that at the same periods all the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are assembled to speak of God, of their poor, and of their own sanctification? Are there not graces attached to this community of prayers and of action. Yet it should be observed that the days indicated are not imperatively required by the Briefs, which allow some days latitude for holding the four general meetings.

ART. 46. — The general meetings, like the Conferences, open with prayer and pious reading.

This arrangement should be exactly observed and it should never be departed from, on any pretext, lest, the general meeting may lose this mark of a Christian assembly. With this motive, the Council-General has always been of opinion that, if it is often useful to invite person who are strangers to the Society, whether for the purpose of removing some prejudices, or of obtaining their co-operation, the prayer and spiritual reading should never out of consideration to them, be omitted. If those persons have the misfortune of being such indifferent Christians as to be annoyed at this being done, it is much better not to invite them. It is of little consequence that our meetings should be brilliant; but it is of

very great consequence that they should preserve their religious character.

ART. 47. — The Secretary having first read the minutes of the preceding meeting, calls aloud the names of the members admitted into the different Conferences since the last general meeting, as furnished to him for this purpose by the different Presidents. These members rise, the Secretaray presents them to the Society and the President, who addresses them in a few words.

The actual presentation of the members to the meeting and to the President, has become almost impossible in practice at rather crowded general meetings. Disorder and confusion would result from carrying it out. But when the meeting is not very large, it is well to keep to this custom, which is a good proof of the spirit of brotherhood, and which is very old.

ART. 48. — The Presidents of Conferences report on the state of their Conferences. A summary of each report, containing the changes of members and of poor families, the total receipts, with the amount and items of expenditure, is deposited in the hands of the Secretary.

This Article cannot now be followed literally, except at general meetings where few Conferences come together : it would, in fact, be impossible that ten or twelve Presidents, sometimes even forty or fifty, should come forward in succession to give accounts of the works of their Conferences; it is then necessary that they should

forward to the Secretary their notes upon the material points, and that the latter, either himself or through another member, should draw up a complete statement.

Further, whatever may be the form of the report, an essential point is that is should contain edifying facts, of a nature to excite zeal, and above all, that it should not be a panegyyric of the Society. The praises which a work receives from without are often the cause of great danger to it; but the panegyrics which it pronounces on itself, are proof that the Christian spirit has departed from it.

ART. 49. — The Secretary then reads letters from those Conferences which have not been able to send a representative to the meeting. He also reads extracts of any other letters which may interest the Society.

ART. 50. — The President then announces the measures taken by the Council of Direction for the good of the Society, and, if necessary, solicits the advice of the meeting.

The last part of the article is entirely optional, as the expression « if necessary » shows. In fact, general meetings have become very numerous, it would be difficult now to take their opinions, in towns more especially.

ART. 51. — (1) The President, or any member of the Society invited by him, addresses the meeting in a few words of christian and charitable exhortation.

The address here referred to, and which occurs sometimes at the commencement, sometimes at the close of the

meetings, should be short, simple, and practical. It should not be either a theoretical discussion, since such matter is not the purpose of the Society; or a sermon, since that would be misplaced in the mouth of a layman. But if it is made so as to present the special wants of the Society, if it points out carefully the difficulties to avoid in this or that work, if it encourages zeal and devotion, it may really contribute to the charitable life of the Conferences.

(2) The Society considers itself fortunate when persons eminent for their character, their virtue, and their knowledge, are, good enough to be present upon the invitation of the President at the general meeting, and to close it, as has been said with some edifying remarks.

The general meetings are, as much as possible, held under the presidency of a Bishop or parish priest or of an ecclesiastical dignitary. It is an honour and a happiness for the disciples of St. Vincent de Paul to be able to relate their feeble labours to their fathers in the faith their guides in Christian works; and when, against their will, they are deprived of such presence, their meetings lose the greatest part of their charm and of their interest.

The rule is, — and this rule justified itself too well to need being insisted upon, — that the places of honour at the meeting belong, of right, to the clergy, and that the lay President does no more than direct the arrangement of the meeting, it is to their Lordships the Bishops, when they are so good as to come amongst us, or to the priests whom they select as their substitutes, that the first places, above the lay Council, belong.

This is a testimony, a very trifling, but a very legitimate one, which Christians owe to the ministers of God, and which should never be forgotten. — (See the Circular of May 31st, 1846).

ART. 52. — After the collection and usual prayers, the meeting closes.

CHAPTER V

THE DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

ART. 53. — Besides its active members, the Society has corresponding members, honorary members and subscribers.

Another category of members has been added to those stated in the Rule — the *Aspirant members*. These members are chosen from amongst young men under eighteen years of age; sometimes they are joined to ordinary Conferences, whose labours they take part in under the direction of the elder members ; sometimes they are sufficiently numerous to be organized into special Conferences, either in Catechism classes for adults (*Catéchismes de persévérance*) or in Christian Colleges or Seminaries. This institution, whatever may be the mode adopted, is very valuable; besides that it gives useful auxiliaries to the Conferences, and provides for recruiting them among young people growing up, it trains the young to the spirit of charity and of zeal, and suggests to them the very natural desire of becoming Active Members of Conferences when they reach at the proper age. The Brief of January 10th,

1845, makes Aspirant Members participators in the Indulgences of the Society, and the Council-General has published a special instruction for the Conferences of Colleges and Institutions.

ART. 54. — (1) A member changing his residence and going to a place where there is no Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, does not thereby cease to belong to the Society; he becomes a *corresponding member;* he puts himself into communication with the Conference or Conferences of the town of his diocese nearest to his residence, and corresponds with the Secretary of the Council or of the Conference of that town. Should there be no Conference in his diocese, he corresponds with the Secretary of the Superior Council.

The Circular of November 1st, 1849, comments upon this article as follows

« It is time to turn this Article, hitherto a dead letter, so to speak, into actual practice. But the great difficulty consists in drawing closely together the relations between corresponding members and the Conferences, and in giving something to do to these members as well as to the Conferences, in order to keep up the relations when once they have been opened. Now, if every isolated member communicated, as the Rule points out, with the Conference of his diocese (or, in countries where that organization exists, with the Superior or the Central Council), if he were received in the capacity of *Corresponding Members*, if he sent his offering to it regularly, and received in return the funds necessary

for succouring, *in the name of the Conferences*, the poor of the locality where he is living; if he transmitted at certain periods, a report upon the families — upon their moral and material condition — much advantage would result from it to all parties; in the first place, to the Corresponding Members, who, in this organization, would recover the incentive of association, of which they were deprived, and in this way would escape from the isolation in which they were in regard to the Society; to the Conferences in the neighbourhood, who would have the nucleus of a body of devoted members ready to dispense in the country, lottery tickets and appeals, to circulat reports almanacks, and good books; to the entire Society, which, by becoming better known, would spread itself more easily in a great number of small towns, of extensive hamlets, and even of villages ; finally, to the poor in the country, who would receive some additional succour, and, what is more important, would obtain more persons to visit them. »

« If this plan be not adopted, here is a more simple way of arriving at the same end, but a less perfect one, as it seems to me. You have doubtless, remarked Sir and dear Brother, in the Brief of January 10th, 1845, a very striking arrangement; the permission bestowed upon isolated members of gaining the Indulgences granted to Conferences, upon the condition of accomplishing, so far as is in their power, the ordinary works of the Society. Every one then is stimulated to devote himself to the task; the common Father of the faithful invites us to it, urges us himself to it, and points out to us the way. Now, if every isolated member, during the leisure of the vocation, followed this valuable

direction, how much good would result for himself, and for the poor who were about him! Let us multiply only by two poor people who received assistance, the number of our brothers, whom every year, leave us to settle themselves in the Country, or who spend there some months, even some weeks, and we shall be surprised at the fruitful harvest which it will be given to us to gather in. »

(2) He receives every year a report on the works of the Society, and maintains with it a communion both of prayers and good works, by doing whatever works of charity he can, and by advancing the interests of the Society whenever he has an opportunity.

« In a word, is it desired, Sir and dear Brother, that these works, isolated indeed, but which,, if my appeal were heard, would not, be without their importance, should propagate and endure? One precaution is necessary, namely, to maintain between the Society and Corresponding Members constant relations such as Article 54 of the Rule points out. The *Bulletin* of the Society, moreover, affords greater facilities for these relations now than at the commencement of our Conferences; following each of us into own home, it comes at certain and frequent periods to point out the progress of Conferences, to indicate to us the dangers to be shunned, the examples to be followed, and thus it may contribute to connect with our charitable works the members whom distance separates from us.

« The hope of seeing these members become the most assiduoous readers of the *Bulletin*, has even been one inducement to undertake this laborious work. »

ART. 55. — (1) Honorary members do not assist at the ordinary meetings of the Conferences.

(2) They are invited, like ordinary members, to all other meetings which are held besides the ordinary meetings of the Conferences.

(3) They should send every year a special contribution to the Treasurer of the Council or Conference of their town.

As a general rule, the Honorary Members do not assist at the ordinary meetings of the Conferences; for there would then be cause to ask ourselves why they, taking part in the weekly meetings, should withdraw themselves from the labours of their brothers; yet, whenever they desire to assist at the meetings, it has never been in the spirit of the Society to refuse them admission, since there is room to hope that they will gain a taste for our works, and will wish to devote themselves to them. But, on one hand, this cannot be the general rule, and on the other, it is to be remarked that whenever they are admitted to the ordinary meetings, they are not to take part in the deliberations. To act otherwise would often be to leave the decision of questions of grave interest to the Conferences, to persons who are not so versed in all their details, as to possess the spirit of them so well as the Active Members.

But, if the presence of Honorary Members at the ordinary meetings of the Conferences be not the Rule, on the contrary their being summoned, to the general meetings as well as to the Masses and pious ceremonies

of the Conferences, such as sermons, retreats, etc., is the Rule.

Unlike the Active Members, who bestow their donations upon their Conferences under the form of secret collections, honorary members are obliged, by force of circumstances, to transmit their offerings in the form of fixed subscriptions. The Rule does not state that their subscriptions should be the same for every one nor do the Briefs of Indulgences make any rule on this point.

In the towns where there is a Particular Council, the Rule decides that the offering of the honorary members should be handed over to that Council, This is a mode of creating funds for it, and thence establishing among the Conferences, a sort of equality for the distribution of relief.

This provision of the Rule, is, nevertheless, not so imperative that a Particular Council may not give over to the Confrences the subscriptions of honorary members. The Conferences will have all the greater zeal for recruiting honorary members if they hope to profit by their subscriptions.

(4) The forms of admission are the same for ordinary and honorary members; where several Conferences are established in a town, honorary members are admitted by the Particular Council.

This point is of very great importance, and unfortunately it is very little observed : sometimes Honorary Members are counfounded with Subscribers, and no more is required of them than alms, more or less large, without any consideration being paid to their religious

habits; at others the denomination of « honorary » is given to Active Members who have been a long time without coming to the Conference, and yet about whom there is some hesitation as to erasing their names. Sometimes even ladies have been enrolled as Honorary Members. All these customs are contrary to the Rule, and ought to be entirely laid aside; for the Honorary Members are actually *Members of the Society*, according to the terms of the Rule. When they wish to become Active Members, it is very difficult as a matter of fact, if not perhaps as a matter of right, to refuse it to them; they assist at the festivals, at the Masses, at the general meetings of the Conferences; they are entitled to very extensive Indulgences ; whence the conclusion, that to be admitted, they ought to be within the conditions which the Society imposes upon its Active Members; otherwise there would be too great a difference between these two classes of members; and if the one were practical Christians, and the others persons who pay little attention to things of a religious character, would there not be reason to fear that in the end the spirit of the Conference might grow cold as a result of this very dissimilarity, and of the perhaps too great consideration which the Active members might wish to show towards the Honorary Members?

By the interpretation of this paragraph of the Rule, and by application of the practice followed long since in large towns, the Council General has de ided that the various Conferences of a town could themselves determine the admission of Honorary Members, on the conditon that the Particular Council should have delegated to them this right by an express resolution. (*See the Bulletin* of December 1907, page 378.)

Besides the Honorary Members, there is another class of members which the Rule does not mention, but which the Circular of May 31st 1846, inform us of under the name of Members of Honour (*Membres d'honneur*), they are the clergy who desire to honour the Conferences by the insertion of their names upon our roll, and whom it seems to be much more respectful to designate under the title of Members of Honour (*Membres d'honneur*), than under that of *Honorary Members.*

ART. 56. — (1) Every Conference may have moreover, simple subscribers.

(2) These are not members of the Society, but are entitled as benefactors to its prayers.

This Article does away with the last objections which might remain against the decision of the preceding article upon the conditions required of Honorary Members; for it points out the modes of making useful to the poor the generosity of those persons, men or women, who wish to bestow their alms upon the Conferences, and who, because they do not fulfil the religious conditions, or by reason of their sex, cannot, according to the Rule, be admitted as Honorary Members subscribers, not being Members of the Society, may be received from among persons of every religious opinion and this latitude cannot lead to any inconvenience.

Many Conferences turn to use, in a way which is very profitable to the poor, the zeal of lady-benefactresses, either as collectors, or for the wardrobe or the employment of the poor, or for some works in which the Conferences cannot engage in a direct manner Such zeal deserves to be imitated.

CHAPTER VI

THE FESTIVALS OF THE SOCIETY

ART. 57. — The Society celebrates the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, and the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, its Patron.

(2) The Conferences assist in a body at Mass, on the 8th of December and 19th of July, and also on the anniversary of the translation of the relics of St. Vincent de Paul.

(3) On these days the members pray for the prosperity of the Catholic Church, for the increase of charity amongst men, and to draw down the blessings of God on the work in which they are associated.

(4) Should any member be absent from the locality, or otherwise prevented from attending, he assists in spirit at least with his brethren, and prays for them as they pray for him.

ART. 58. — The day after the general meeting in Lent, all the members of the Society assist in a body at the *Requiem* Mass, which is offered in the town for the repose of the souls of the deceased members of the Society (1).

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(1) The original form of this article was modified by the Council General in accordance with the Brief of the 13th September 1859, which transferred to the first Sunday of Lent the Plenary Indulgence previously

According to the Brief of January 10th, 1845, the the festivals should be celebrated on the very day of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, the 8th of December, and on that of the feast of St. Vincent de Paul. the 19th of July, and of the Translation of the Relics of the Saint, the second Sunday after Easter. If the day were changed, the Indulgences could no longer be obtained. As actual difficulties often arose, as to Conferences, and particularly those in the country, fulfilling these conditions, the result unhappily was that a great number of Conferences were deprived of the Indulgences which the Common Father of the Faithful has dispensed to us with such great liberality. To remedy this inconvenience, the Council-General has solicited of the Sovereign Pontiff a modification of the Brief of the 10th January, 1845, and the extension of these precious favours, which it has obtained by a third Brief, bearing date the 18th of March, 1853, is as follows :

1st. The Plenary Indulgences granted by the Brief of the 10th January, 1845. for the 8th of December, can be obtained at the Masses specially celebrated for the Society, either on the very day of the feast of the

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granted for assisting at the Mass of the first Monday of Lent; now by virtue of the extension granted by the Rescript of the 30th January 1888, as explained by the letter of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences dated 15th July 1888, it is no longer only on the first Sunday of Lent that this Indulgence can be gained but on any one of the seven days following. Regarding assisting at Mass, see, hereafter, the same Brief of 13th Sept. 1859 and the Instruction on the Indulgences.

Immaculate Conception, or on the day to which it is transferred in the diocese, or on one of the seven days immediately following the Feast.

2nd. The Plenary Indulgence granted by the Brief of the 10th of January, 1845, for the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, can be obtained, either on the 19th of July, or during the seven days which follow it.

3rd. The Plenary Indulgence granted for the feast of the Translation can be obtained either on the day of the Feast or on one of the seven days which follow it.

4th. In the same way the Plenary Indulgence granted for the first Sunday of Lent (the Mass for the intention of deceased and of the General Meeting) can be equally gained during the seven days which follow the Sunday.

For precise information as to the manner in which the Indulgences may be gained it is indispensable that the actual text of the Pontificial Briefs and Rescripts should be consulted.

The observance of the festivals of the Society is one of the obligations with which we ought to be most deeply impressed. How, in fact, can the members of Conferences hope to see their labours prosper, if they do not beseech God to bless them, and what more powerful means of obtaining this blessing is there, than to ask it all together, united by the same prayer and in the same faith, at the foot of the same altar ? Besides how is it possible to make up for the union of hearts, which is the result of these pious practices and one of their most precious results ? Without the festivals of the Society, the ties which mutually bind the Conferences together would be very quickly loosened and the material means which have been pointed out many

times already would soon become useless for the want of spiritual means, those blessed by the Church. It is, therefore of the very highest importance, that every Conference, and in every Conference, every member, should observe the four festivals of the Society as scrupulously as possible ; a member, however zealous, however Christianlike he may be in other respects, does not possess the true spirit of the Society, if he voluntarily neglects to observe its feasts, and a Conference which falls into this danger sees in a short time the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul grow weaker, and become extinct within it.

The situation of the member (para 4 of Rule 57) absent from the locality or otherwise prevented from attending the Mass and the general meeting with his brothers has been modified by the Rescript of the 30 th January 1888. It results from that Rescript that the same Indulgences may be obtained by that member, if he has been prevented from attending on account of serious illness or habitual infirmity, by performing some other work of piety assigned to him by his confessor. (See the text of the Rescript).

Devotion to the dead is one of the conditions of the existence of a lasting work, and in Christianity it is so rigorous a duty, that to omit it is in some sort to fail in one of the principal obligations of the Christian life. The Rule has expressly recommended it ; and thus the usage has since been established of reciting during the meeting of the Conference, the *De Profundis* for the members lately deceased,, and of having Mass celebrated for the repose of their souls. Some Conferences, not content with the anniversary of the first Sunday in Lent add to it that of the Comme-

moration of the dead. The Brief of the 10th of January 1845, recompenses by a special indulgence the act of attending at Masses for the deceased members.

OBSERVATION

ART. 59. — None of the preceding rules impose any obligation of conscience, but the Society relies for their fulfilment on the zeal of its members, and their love of God and their neigbour.

RULES

FOR

SUPERIOR COUNCILS

(Extract from the *Bulletin* of 1st May 1850.)

For many years the really providential extension of the Society has, in the countries situated outside France, rendered an institution necessary which our first rules did not anticipate, viz., the establishment of Councils charged with the direction of the Conferences in an entire country, and constituted as intermediate between the Council-General, the centre of the whole Society, and the Conferences separated from it by distance, language and local customs

This institution, self-begotten so to speak, has become happily extended and has contributed, by its development, to the progress of our Work in foreign countries, where otherwise it would have penetrated with difficulty, and where particularly it would have supported itself with still greater difficulty. In their turn, England,

Ireland, Belgium, Holland, Rhenish Prussia, Mexico, Canada, Spain, Italy and many other countries have seen such Councils established; and as a result of this organization, the Conferences of these different countries have been formed with greater facility in a common spirit, and have been multiplied in a more rapid manner. Experience was then conclusive, and the moment was come for incorporating into our written rules a collection of regulations applicable to these Councils; these rules form arrangements which, without infringing upon usages already venerable in some portions of the Society, and confirmed moreover by the Council-General, without being even a code, invariable and absolute for the future, yet may serve as a guide and as a model for Councils as they are successively formed.

With this idea the Council-General has drawn up a series of articles in addition to the Rule; but before adopting them definitely, it desired to receive information from the good advice of the Councils of Europe, that is to say, of those which time and distance allowed it to consult. This advice did not fail and great reliance has been placed on it; it has most certainly contributed to improve so important a Rule.

The regulations which we are about to explain briefly and the text of which we give further on, form a summary of local usages, and of the chapters of the General Rules relative to Particular Councils and to the Council-General itself. The Councils are, in fact, intermediate between the Particular Councils and the Conferences of a town, entrusted with the interest of Conferences of one or more Dioceses, and the Council-General charged with the direction of all the Conferences. Their functions, as their nature, ought then to

possess something reciprocal, and this idea has been uppermost in the preparation of the Rules respecting them.

At the very commencement, a primary question arose, as to the name to be given to these Councils. Should they be designated in the Rule under the title of Provincial Councils, as the two Briefs of the 10th of Feruary and 12th of August 1845, had done ? Strong reasons weighed in favour of this expression, one already old among us, and accepted by most of the Councils; but the apprehension which was manifested, that in many countries it would awaken national susceptibilities dangerous to the Society, has induced us to adopt a new denomination-that of Superior Councils.

The areas of the Superior Councils, and the place of their seat, are points which the first article of this Rule hands over to the Council-General. It is practice, converted purely and simply into a written rule.

The third Article treats of an important question, — the constitution itself of the Superior Council. After having well considered it, and weighed the different opinions expressed, it has been judged preferable to summon all the Conferences (whom the Superior Counsil is to unite) to co-operate in its formation, in order thereby to make its authority greater. This co-operation may take place, either by means of delegates, chosen in equal numbers by each Conference, or by means of correspondence, according to local circumstances, and finally, it is sufficient for the validity of the constitution of the Council, that all the Conferences should be *summoned* to take part in it; it is not ncessary that they should actually have done so. If they neglect to reply to the summons they are presumed to have given their

consent. To establish greater order, the election should be directed by the Central Council, or in default of this by the Particular Council established in the town where the Superior Council is to have its seat, or by the Conference of that town, if a Particular Council is not as yet in existencee.

The 4th Article reproduces for the nomination of the President of the Superior Council, a mode which is analogous to that adopted for the nomination of the President-General, and of which experience has shewn the advantages. But the delay of two months is reduced to one month, as the area is less extended.

The 8th Article anticipates the case where there are, in the same town, a Superior Council, and a Particular Council. In such a case it is decided that the Presidentship of the Particular Council belongs by right to the President of the Superior Council; but the latter may delegate it if he deem it necessary. This point has been already settled by the General Rule as to Paris, where the Council-General, the Central Council of the diocese and the Particular Council of the town assemble; this rule has been sanctioned by experience. It has, then, appeared useful to extend it here to the cases in which multiplicity of affairs, or any other reason, would prevent, as in many towns, the function of the Particular Council being entrusted to the Superior Council.

The 10th Article affirms the unvarying judicial powers of the Council-General, relative to the admission of Conferences into our Society. It is for the Council-General to pronounce upon their aggregation, having, however, taken the advice of the Superior Councils.

This custom, while preserving the common spirit, — the unity which is indispensable, associates the Superior

Councils in the development of our charitable family; it provides against the diversity of regulations, it consolidates our little, our wholly brotherly, plan of government, whilst preventing the admission, without any due cause, of new Conferences who come to ask the rights of fellowship amongst us.

These happy relations of fraternity and union are still more closely cemented by the 12th Article, which, by summoning the Presidents of the Superior Council into the bosom of the Council-General, by giving them the right to take their places there, when they are at Paris, by suggesting that when they are absent, their advice upon grave questions by means of written communications, be taken, assures thus to the whole Society the concurrence of their intelligence, their devotion, and their charity. The first trial made of this combination previous to drawing up the present Rule, has already sufficiently proved its use in the eyes of the Council-General.

Let us conclude by two observations :

1st. The Articles which are about to be perused form henceforth part of the General Rule; they have been inserted in it; but it has appeared preferable not to blend them into the body of the Rule itself, and not to alter the order, now an old one, of the Articles; to touch it would have been to introduce confusion and to change in some degree a record venerated in our Society, since it is almost contemporaneous with its foundation. Moreover, the authority of these new arrangements will not, on this account, be less in the eyes of our Conferences and of all our brothers.

2nd. The present Rule is applicable to Councils now existing abroad whose mission is to direct the Confe-

rences belonging to distinct nations. But it is not, and has not been, an obstacle to the formation of Councils of a more limited circumscription, which become, and are daily becoming, more necessary for binding closely together among themselves the Conferences which are situated near one another. Far from this being the case, it is for such Conferences a model and a basis for organization

The following, then, is the text of this Rule, adopted by the Council-General at its meeting of the 1st of April, 1850 :

ART. 1. — When the Conferences of a more extensive district than that of a Particular Council desire to be united by a Council, a Superior Council may be constitutued for this purpose, conformably to the terms of the brief of our Holy Father, pope Gregory XVI, dated January the 10th, 1845. This Council is named after the district for which it is establised. and which is determined by the Council-General.

This Council, within its area, is the representative of the Council-General, which forms the centre of the whole brotherhood, and it governs all the Councils and Conferences already established, or which may be established there. Its object is to preserve the unity and spirit of the Society; it forms the natural and usual link of correspondence between the Councils and Conferences with the Council-General.

ART. 2. — The superior Council consists of a President, of one or more Vice-Presidents,

of a Secretary, a Treasurer, one or several Vice-Secretaries, a Vice-Treasurer, and of several Councillors.

ART. 3. — When the President is to be named for the first time, all the Conferences of the area are invited to assist in doing so. The election shall take place under the superintendence of the Conference or Council belonging to the town wherein the Superior Council is to be established.

ART. 4. — When a new President is to be named, the Vice-President assembles the Council. This preparatory sitting is devoted to deliberation as to the person who may be eligible for this office. If the former President be still alive, he is invited to designate the person whom he should deem it of advantage to select.

When the members have come to an understandng upon one or several names, the meeting adjourns for a month ; during the interval the proceedings of this preparatory meeting are made known to the Presidents of the Particular Councils, who consult their colleagues, and to the Presidents of the Conferences, who consult their respective Boards, or even the Conferences over which they preside; all the Presidents transmit their opinions to the Council, and according to these opinions the Council proceeds to the election; an exact minute of which is recorded.

While the election is pending, all the members of the area address, either in private or at the meetings, a special prayer to God, the *Veni Creator*, in order thet his Spirit may guide them in their choice.

ART. 5. — The members of the Superior Council are named as well as those of the Board, by the President, with the advice of the Council.

ART. 6. — The President presides over the Superior Council, and over the general meetings of the Conferences of the town where it is established. He convenes extraordinary meetings; in case of absence, his place is supplied by the Vice-President, or even, if necessary by any other member of the Council.

ART. 7. — The Secretary keeps an account of the names, Christian Names, professions, residences, and dates of reception of the different members of the conferences belonging to the town where the Superior Council holds its sittings (1). He also notes down the persons who form the Board of the Councils, or of the Conferences of the area, as well as the places where, and days and hours when, they hold their sittings.

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(1) At the time when this rule was made, certain towns called to be the seat of a Superior Council had only one Conference and the Secretary of the Superior Council was also Secretary of the Conference.

He draws up minutes of the sittings held by the Council, and of general meetings. He is entrusted under the superintendence of the President, with the general correspondence that is kept up with the Presidents and Secretaries of the Councils and Conferences as well as with the Council-General. He has the custody of the records of the Society in the area.

The Treasurer has the care of the funds. He keeps an exact account of the receipts and expenditure; he submits his accounts to the Council.

ART. 8. — *In case the Superior Council* does not fulfil, for the local Conferences, the office of a Particular Council, the presidency of the latter devolves by right on the President of the Superior Council, who names the Presidents and Vice-Présidents of the Conferences and Special Works, as also the Board of the Particular Council.

In case of any impediment, his Presidency over the Particular Council is supplied by a member of the Superior Council, whom he delegates for that purpose (2).

ART. 9. — The funds of the Council are maintained ey extraordinary donations made to

(2) What is said here as regards the relations of the Superior Council with the Particular Council is also applicable to those of the Superior Council with the Central Council ,when the latter exists in the same town.

the Society in the area, by collections at the general meetings of the town in which it is established, and the contributions which are annually sent by each Conference or by each Council of the area, towards the general expenses.

ART. 10. — When a Conference or Particular Council is about to be formed in the circumscription, the Superior Council examines how far it may be proper to propose its aggregation to the Council-General. This aggregation can never take place but with the previous advice of the Superior Council.

It likewise refers to the Council-General, when it is deemed necessary to dissolve any particular conference or Council. In a case of urgency, it may temporarily suspend the sittings, and refer the matter to the Council-General.

ART. 11. — The Superior Council governs all the practical details of the Conferences in the area, either through the medium of correspondence or of circulars from the president, and watches over the observance of the rules, reserving, however, to the Council-General weighty questions, and such as may concern the welfare of the Society at large.

ART. 12. — The Presidents of the Superior Councils, when present in Paris, attend at, and take part in, the sittings of the Council-

General, of which they are members, as long as they continue to exercise this Office.

The Council-General may ask for their opinion in writing upon such matters as interest the whole Society.

RULES

OF THE

CENTRAL COUNCILS[1]

(Published in the *BULLETIN* of May 1856)

It is important to point out clearly the differences which distinguish *Central* Councils from *Superior* Councils and *Particular* Councils.

The *Particular* Council as we have seen, is simply a delegation formed from representatives from the Conferences of the same town; a delegation upon which is conferred, by the very fact of its establishment, certain prerogatives of which the Conferences deprive them-

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(1) In applying the following regulations to the case of a Central Council situated within the District of a Superior Council, it will be necessary to read « *Superior Council* » for « *Council-General* » in every place in which the term occurs throughout the articles except in the sentence.

« Its seat and circumscription are fixed by the Council-General » in the first paragraph of the first article.

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selves for its advantage. Of these prerogatives the most important is the nomination of the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Conferences. Because of the fact that the Conference thus surrenders a part of its autonomy, it will be seen that the action of a Particular Council ought not to extend too far. It could not, without inconvenience, go beyond the suburbs or district over which is felt the influence of a town.

If this is to be so the Council-General and the Superior-Coouncil, both located at the seat of Government, of a State or of a large Province, will be too far removed from the Particular Councils or the Isolated Conferences. Hence the necessity of intermediate machinery.

Thus Councils designed to facilitate the connection of the Particular Councils or the Conferences with the Council-General and Superior Councils and to assure the proper working of our government are established in large towns or areas rich in Conferences. These *Councils*, to which has been given the name of *C*[illegible] have become the principal instrument[illegible] blishment of new Conferences, [illegible] time devote their attenti[illegible] rules and of the spiri[illegible]

These Councils [illegible] and the Coun[illegible] it will be [illegible] It will [illegible] or fo[illegible]

In [illegible] *Cen*[illegible] Wh[illegible] ar[illegible]

Since 1911 there have been created, in certain countries, too wide-spread for the action of the Superior Council to be easily exercised, *Central Metropolitan Councils*, which exercise, in respect to the Central and Particular Councils of an ecclesiastical province, some of the powers of the Superior Council under the authority of the latter.

ART. 1. — When it becomes advisable to unite by, a Council the Conferences within a more extended circumscription than that of a Particular Council, there may be instituted for this purpose a Central Council, conformably to the conditions of the brief of our Holy Father, pope Gregory XVI, of January 10th, 1845. This Council takes the name of the city in wrich : is established. Its seat and its circumscription are fixed by the Council-General.

It represents, within its circumscription, the [illegible] General—the centre of the whole [illegible] jurisdiction over all Councils [illegible] established, or which [illegible] ; it maintains the [illegible] it is the natural [illegible] correspondance [illegible] nces, and

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Central Council until the respective Right Rev. Bishops have approved, and directly authorized the measure. In the preliminary observations on the constitution of the Society, it is laid down that « we will never undertake anything new or important, within any ecclesiastical jurisdiction, without first asking the advice of the Ordinary ». In so important a step we surely could not be unfaithful to this fundamental principle of our Conferences.

2nd. The circumscription of these Councils may be changed by the Council-General ; but the same formalities are to be observed as those followed in instituting them.

If, for instance, Conferences should be multiplied, within the jurisdiction of any one Council, to such an extent as to require two or three Councils in place of a single one, the welfare of the Society should not be hindered by an organization whose sole object is the general good.

Lastly. It is to be remarked that if the Central Council is the natural and usual channel of correspondence between Councils and Conferences, and the Council-General, it by no means follows that the direct correspondence of Conferences with the Council-General ought to be abandonned. This correspondence has formed a connection too pleasant to be broken, or even enfeebled. New communications may be opened between neighbouring branches; but those which exist should not be suppressed.

ART. 2. — The Central Council is composed of a President, of one or more Vice-Presidents, of a Secretary, of a Treasurer, or one of several Vice-Secretaries, of a Vice-Trea-

surer, of the Presidents of the Particular Councils within its area and of several Councillors, chosen from among the Presidents or members of the Conferences of the city where it is located, or within its jurisdiction.

Article 2 modifies the former usage, within respect to members of Central Councils. Heretofore, the Presidents of all the Conferences within the circumscription were members of the Central Council.

That plan, although useful in the infancy of the Society, became soon almost impracticable from the multiplication of Conferences : for the Presidents of the distant Conferences, and especially those of rural Conferences, being very numerous, could not frequently leave home; hence the meetings of the Council were soon reduced to two or three annually. In this state things the Central Councils became rather nominal than real institutions. And yet it is the duty of Councils to busy themselves about the interests of their Conferences throughout the whole year; there are aggregations to be prepared, advice to be given in cases laid before them by the Conferences, dangers to be indicated, and examples worthy of imitation to be pointed out. It was necessary, therefore, that at their sittings there should be a full attendance of members, so that from their numbers a moral weight might be given to their proceedings and to their decisions. It is for this reason Article 2, in addition to the Board, creates several Councillors, who may be selected either from the city where the Council sits, or from other points within its area. Moreover, the Presidents of Particular Councils are members by right. These latter Councils are now es-

tablished, not only in cities, but even in the country, in order to bind together adjacent Conferences; as, for instance, those of a canton or several neighbouring parishes. As it devolves upon them to give life and activity to those Conferences, naturally feeble both in resources and members, they are of real importance; and it behoved the Presidents of those Conferences to be present at the sittings of the Central Council that they might represent their Conferences.

» The holding of the general meetings of the area » says the Council-General in promulgating more than half a century ago, the rule for Central Councils « is in no way hindered by the present organization of the Central Councils. On the contrary, such meetings will be much better organized when a Central Council directs them; they can be preceded by a special meetings of the Presidents and delegates, in which improvements can be mutually suggested, advice asked for or given, and the details of what is done in each Conference communicated; and although such meetings may be informal, and not be intended to give formal decisions, they will not, on that account, be less intimate and cordial, and certainly not less interesting or useful. » Experience has justified these previsions, and assemblies of this sort have become more and more important. In order to encourage attendance at diocesan general meetings, as well as those of districts uniting the Conferences of several dioceses, the Sovereign Pontiffs have deigned to grant precious indulgences to all members, active or honorary, who take part in them (see hereinafter the Rescripts of 21st 1892, and 17th July 1913).

The members of the Council — other than those who form the Board, and the Presidents of the Parti-

cular Councils — will, in practice, be selected in the city where the Council sits; but they also may be chosen from other Conferences of the circumscripton. Members, in fact, should not form part of the Council simply to give advice but to take an active part in its proceedings ; and one of the most useful services they can render would be to visit neighbouring Conferences which are being organized, with the view of infusing into them the spirit of the Society, and then the older Conferences to whom these fraternal visits will always be precious.

ART. 3. — When, for the first time, a President is to be chosen, the appointment is made by the Council-General.

This article is the application of a usage, existing since the first organization of Central Councils. In fact, when, for the first time a President is to be chosen, the Conferences not having had any relations with one another, any advice on the choice of a President of the Central Council would be impossible from the want of sufficient information on the part of the greater number.

When a Central Council is established in the jurisdiction of Superior Council, it is the duty of Superior Council to make the nomination.

ART. 4. — When, at any subsequent period a new President is to be chosen, the Council is convoked by the Vice-President. This sitting, which is preparatory, is devoted entirely to a deliberation upon the person most proper to be selected for the Office. The former President, if alive, is requested to designate

that person, whom, in his opinion, it would be most desirable to select.

When one or several names are agreed upon, the Council transmits the minutes of first sitting to the Council-General, which duly offers its advice in relation thereto. After receiving this advice, a month's adjournment takes place, and the names agreed upon, are, in the interval, submitted to the Presidents of the particular Councils within the circumscription, who consult their colleagues in reference thereto ; and to the Presidents of Conferences, who consult their Boards, and event the Conferences over which they preside. The one and the other transmit to the Central Council the result of their consultations which then proceeds to the election, after which it causes an exact report of the proceedings to be drawn up.

Whilst the election is pending, all the members of the area offer up, either in private or at the sittings, the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, as a special prayer to God, to direct by his Spirit the choice about to be made.

The mode of election pointed out above is very nearly a reproduction of the Rule followed in selecting the President-General, and the Presidents of Superior Councils. The Central Council prepares the election; then consults the Conferences and Particular Councils; and finally, after being enlightened by their advice, proceeds to election. The only point of difference is, that the Council-General is consulted on the election that is to take place.

When a Central Council is established within the jurisdiction of a Superior Council it is the latter Council that ought to be consulted on the election of a President of the Central Council and not the Council General.

ART. 5. — Excepting the Presidents of Particular Councils who are members in their own right, the members of the Central Council as well as the officers constituting the Board, are appointed by the President, with the advice of the Council.

ART. 6. — The President presides at the sittings of the Central Council, and also at the General meetings of the Conferences of the city where it is situated. To him, also, belongs the right to preside at the general meetings of the whole circumscription. He calls extraordinary meetings. In case of absence, he causes his place to be supplied by one of the Vice-Presidents, and even, in case of need, by another member of the Council.

ART. 7. — In the Central Council does not fulfil, for the Conferences of the city where it is located, the functions of a Particular Council, the Presidency of the latter devolves by right upon the President of the Central Council, as also the appointment of the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Conferences and Special Works, and Board of the particular Council.

In case of hindrance he causes his place as President of the Particular Council to be taken

by a member of the Central Council chosen for the purpose.

One might think from the first phrase of this article, that the fusion of the two Councils, Central and Particular, should be the custom, and their co-existence the exception. The Council-General does not admit this interpretation, which long experience obliges it to reject. The rule is the separation of the two Councils; it is imposed by the difference of their composition and of the services which they have to render. The Council-General is so convinced of the necessity of this dual control, that it desires that, wherever possible, the President of the Central Council should delegate to a member of this Council the presidency of the Particular Council.

It will be useful to add that, though the President of the Particular Council has the right, in accordance with article 31 of the Rule, to nominate the Presidents of the Conferences under the jurisdiction of the Particular Council, this does not apply to the Ceneral Council, who has no perogative of this kind over the Conferences directly dependent on the Central Council. According to the common right these Conferences remain masters of the choice of their Presidents.

ART. 8. — The funds of the Central Council is supplied by special donations made to it, by collections taken up at the general meetings of the circumscription, and by the offerings annually sent by each Conference, and by each Council to assist in defraying the general expenses.

ART. 9. — When a Conference or a Particular Council ir organised within the circumscription, the Central Council inquires into the propriety of proposing its aggregation to the Council-General. This aggregation can never be granted without the advice of the Central Council.

The Council also refers to the Council-General, when, in its opinion, it is expedient to dissolve, or suspend a conference or Council.

These two articles contain only matters of detail which explain themselves. It would be superflous to insist upon, as it would be useless to insert in the Regulations details on the composition of the Board and the duties of the various officers : nor has an essential point — for it follows as matter of course — been mentioned, that the meetings of these Councils, like those of all others, should, as with Conferences, begin and end by prayer. Nor have any recurring dates for the sittings been prescribed, as they depend much upon circumstances; but they should be held if possible, monthly, in order that, on the one hand, the whole Council may better know what passes within the area; on the other, that the various questions which arise may not be left too long undecided. It was chiefly in the hope of inducing the more frequent sitting of Central Councils, that their composition has been made such as it now is.

Such is this Rule in its entirety. It approaches closely to that of the Superior Councils and does not reallly differ from the latter except in the mode of nomination of the Presidents and the members who compose it. What it particularly aims at is to promote more centres

of practical and local life. May these rules tend to the good direction of the Conferences, and contribute to the fostering among them of ,the spirit of charity simplicity and zeal, which will always be their principal strength. This is the most cherished wish of the Council-General.

INSTRUCTIONS

TO BE FOLLOWED IM FORMING

CONFERENCES OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Deus est qui inhabitare facit
unius moris in domo.
Ps: LXVII. (1)

People who have never borne an active part in the meetings of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, frequently form a false idea concerning the difficulties of founding a Conference. To clear away all errors on such a point, it will be well to explain, in a few words in what our Society principally consists, and to state by what practical means Conferences have been hitherto founded. We shall, perhaps, furnish many with matter for reflection, and seriously examining whether it be in their power to endow the town they inhabit with such a useful institution.

As it has often been said, the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul are not, necessarily, designed to relieve *a vast number of poor*. Such a result would, doubt-

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(1) It is God who makest the solitary to dwell in a family.

less, be a source of happiness to them; but it is neither an obligation nor a necessary condition of existence. Their chief and fundamental object is the sanctification of the members by the personal performance of acts of charity : and this end may be attained by the humblest Conference with few resources as well as by a Conference rich in works and fruitful in benefits. From which observations spring several consequences.

The first, is, that those who wish to found a Conference, should not be deterred by the fewness of willing helpers they meet with. The first Conference of Paris, the mother of all the others, was commenced by 7 members; that of London by 13; and that of Caen by 3. All of these are now in a flourishing state, and have grown many off-shoots. Nor is it necessary that people of high station should lend their influence, to recommend a newly founded Conference to public attention. The humblest beginnings, as daily experience shows, have nearly always proved the best.

The second consequence is, that established Societies should not apprehend a dangerous rivalry from the formation of a Conference. The Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul have often shown the necessity of new Works, and have furthered the foundations of many (1).

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(1) The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which is exclusively composed of men, carefully avoids those Works which concern the other sex, and leaves them entirely to Ladies Societies. But in order that there may be no gap left in the organization of charity, it has often contributed, by its wishes and exhortations, to found Ladies' Works for the patronage of orphan and apprentice girls, etc., etc.

up to the present day, *they have caused none to decline, nor diminished the prosperity of any.*

Moreover, in the field of charity, there are always unfortunately too many ears to be gathered by the latest gleaners; and, without injuring either charitable boards, or the works of Ladies of Charity, or those of Sisters of Charity, or parochial Works, everywhere some poor families, — say ten or twenty — may be adopted, and thus will be furnished sufficient exercise for the zeal of the members of the Conference.

Thirdly, it is by no means necessary to be provided with fixed resources. A society that announces itself with pomp, and that declares its intention to relieve a whole class of poor must necessarily find means for insuring certain and adequate revenues, in order to expect success. But when an association is so small in number as a Conference may with impunity be, it may live, as it were, on its daily bread. This passage of Holy Writ applies well to us. « If thou have much give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little » (1).

Thus, objections that for a long time did, and still do, prevent the establishment of Conferences, are done away with by a simple observation. If the first and fundamental object of the Society had been well known, many towns would have had their Conference of St. Vincent de Paul long since, and the Catholic youth and the poor would be now enjoying the benefits of the institution.

Let us now enter upon the details of organization,

(1) Tobias, IV, 9, 23.

and see if it be possible to make them thoroughly understood.

We have already said that a Conference need not be numerous, particularly at its outset; but it is essential that all the members composing it should be animated with the spirit ot the Society; for which, it is not only requisite that each member should act up to all the precepts of the Catholic Religion, be a sincere and practical Cathollic, but also that he should have carefully studied the customs, traditions, and habits of our Conferences. If, then, any one, who wishes to undertake the establishment of one of our charitable colonies, has no practical knowledge of our way of proceeding, his first care should be, to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the publications in which the Society has endeavoured to express its spirit, and describe its way of proceeding. He should study, first, the General Rule, and especially its preamble, which is almost entirely taken from the writings of St. Vincent de Paul : the Articles of the Rule itself which are too often ignored; then he should also read the Circulars of the Presidents General of the Society, where the solution of the most usual and practical difficulties is given; and lastly, the General Reports, where examples are brought to illustrate and confirm the precepts. Without such study, it is to be feared that a person would fall into the very difficulties which the first brothers found it no easy thing to get out of; and it is also to be feared, that under the name of Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, societies would be formed resembling them but in name, fulfilling none of the conditions attached to the Indulgences.

Such preliminary study will not be a long task for a sincere Christian. As soon as it is accomplished, he

must look round him for members of the future Conference; one can easily understand that the first step in relation to those whom one thinks may become members, is to explain to them shortly the organization of the Society and to ask them whether they will adopt its spirit and fundamental principles. But he must, on no account, apply to any but sincere Christians—Catholics who do not blush at performing all the duties commanded by the Church. Sad experience has proved that it was fatal to swerve from this rule and that to admit persons, however charitable, and however animated with religious convictions, but hesitating as to certain precepts of the Church, would be to sow in the bosom of the Conferences a germ of division, perhaps of death.

Let us also add, to combine those elements of the Conference, which shall one day give it life and health, some other precautions which ought to be observed. Even the sincere performance of the duties of Christianity is not sufficient for the founders of a Conference. They should unite with those duties, enlightened and thorough piety, a spirit of conciliation., peace, and humility, ardent love for the poor and for the Society, and a perseverance undaunted by difficulties inherent to any organization. They must bear in mind, that they are destined to be the elders of the Society whom the younger brothers will look to for example and traditions; wherefore they should possess such qualities as will be edifying, at all times and in all places. Such members are fortunately more easily found than is generally supposed; and are so far from being found in only a certain class or station of life, that experience has fully proved, that the closest intimacy, and most hearfelt

affection, reign in those Conferences, where the ages, position, and education of the members vary most. We shall not, of course, cite either any individual or Conference; but we can affirm that, to our knowledge, in all Conferences of Paris, the mixture of elements most opposite, in a worldly sense, but united in the spirit of charity, has been attempted, practiced, and continued with success.

It may, it is true, sometimes be found that timid and circumspect people will be afraid to make an engagement that binds them down, and is liable to disturb their ordinary course of business. All such objections cannot be overruled : but one means should not be left untried, since it has often succeeded in such cases — it is to offer to admit them, to the Conference on trial. If they have any zeal in them, difficulties will soon vanish : their desire to see again their poor, to come back to the Conference and to rejoin their brothers will triumph over difficulties, and their worldly occupations will be made to square with the duties of charity; thus, the Conference will have acquired the co-operation of valuable members who will contribute to its present and future welfare.

Supposing desirable members to have been found : taken from different ranks of Society they are all united in the desire of relieving the poor of Jesus Christ and to advance themselves in, or at least to enter on the way of, Christian perfection.

A last step is necessary before establishing a Conference, and that is, to obtain the sanction and protection of the local ecclesiastical authority. It must indeed, always be borne in mind, that, though *the majority* of our brothers are laymen, and the duties of priesthood

do not allow many of its members to join in our Works, we are, and intend to remain, obedient Christians, and respectful sons of the Church.

Many Conferences are wont to ask the ecclesiastical authority to appoint a priest to be their Spiritual Director. This custom, which is found in all the Conferences of England, Ireland and the United States, merits attention, while it preserves the lay character of the Society, it also strengthens the tie that unites it to the Church and, in all questions relating to the moral and religious state of the poor, it ensures the authority of prudent and devoted guide.

In some places, our brothers have been so fortunate as to get the Venerable Bishop of their diocese or the parish priests, to accept the title of president of honour. All these customs, though differing in form, come to the same in the end; for they all witness to our unanimous desire to rally under our legitimate pastors, and the ministers of the Church.

As soon as such sanction is obtained, the most important thing is to meet immediately, and to set to work.

At this particular point of progress, some Conferences have lost much precious time in discussing their Rules. They thought that local considerations required some departure from certain customs enumerated in the General Rule; and that, before entering on works of charity, it was necessary to fix their landmarks. We cannot too earnestly entreat those, who are about to organize a Conference, not to act thus. Indeed, it may now be said that our Rule, submitted, as it was, for the approbation of His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI, and, so to speak, consecrated by more than sixty years application in various countries where

manners, laws and customs are wholly different, recommends itself with the most indisputable authority to the Conferences. Besides, it was not at the outset of our Society that it was drawn up : following the example of St. Vincent de Paul, our guide as well as our patron, who only gave its constitutions to the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission a considerable time after it was established, our founders also waited many years before embodying in written rules the *simple usages which* as is said by the preliminary article upon the Rule—*had for lengthened period been followed and loved.* Therefore, when one or another of us take part in the establishment of a Conference, instead of engaging in a discussion, let us engage systematically in the practice of Rules, the wisdom of which is now everywhere recognized, and accordingly as we apply them we will observe the disappearance of objections and difficulties which at the very outset had suggested themselves to our minds.

The first care of our new brothers will be the composition of the Board. The regulations which govern its nomination are laid down in the General Rule; and they will do well to conform to them, if it be only to appoint a provisional board.

It frequently happens that, during the first few days, the brothers do not know one another, well enough to be able proceed to the election of a permanent board. On this point, their line of conduct must be determined by circumstances; sometimes the President is pointed out in advance by general opinion, at others it would be wiser not to pledge the future, but to await the arrival of brothers able to give more time or more experience, or more authority to

our modest works. Moreover, whenever the election does take place, we cannot too earnestly engage our brothers to meditate on the instructions contained in the circular of March 1st, 1844, where the qualities which make a good President are pointed out; gentleness of temper; a sincere and ardent affection for the Conference, its members and its poor; an equal dislike for rash novelties, and for the spirit of routine; he should, if possible, be in independent circumstances, that he may be able to devote all his energy to the common work; and lastly, but above all, he should be endowed with an active mind, wisdom and prudence.

After the installation of the officers, the day and place of meeting should be immediately fixed. A Conference that meets in a public building, in some of the Church premises, in the presbytery —if it be posssible — in a school, in a room at the Town Hall, more easily attracts new members and to some extent borrows from the place of its meetings some of the credit associated with the place itself. On the contrary, it is a great disadvantage to a Conference to be indebted for its place of meeting to the precarious good will of a person, who is not a member; and, moreover, the fact of having to go to the house of a person with whom, however respectable, one is unacquainted, the little susceptibilities which, unfortunately, exist in some localities, will frequently be made a pretext, or given as a reason, for not joining the Conference; and thus, the work may languish for want of a soil where it can grow freely. Our brothers should, then, hasten to find a proper meeting-room but it must be understood, that the search should not last long enough to endanger the regularity of the meetings.

These preliminaries will generally be settled at the first meeting; but whether they are or not, it is highly important that the brothers should not separate, for the first time, without having adopted some families, without having fixed upon the tradesmen who are to supply the provisions to be given to the poor, and without having agreed, at least provisionally, on the extent and nature of the relief to be given. Thus, entering immediately into practical existence, the members will be bound to the Conference; not one of them, if he has any charity in his heart, will fail to be present at the next meeting, if, in the interval, he has visited a sick, or an infirm fellow creature. Differences of opinion about charity, about the way of relieving, and about theories, will give way before questions of practice, and a constantly increasing energy will spring up.

It will perhaps have been remarked, that in earnestly recommending our future brothers to hasten to adopt some work of charity, we mentioned the visitation of the poor at their homes. We did so designedly. It is a work that becomes our Society more than any other. The patronage of apprentices occupies but few members unless the visitation of the poor be joined to it. The Work of Saint Francis Regis calls for the exertion of still fewer members; and two or three are enough to establish rent saving Banks. Although it is to be hoped that such works will eventually be founded, they cannot be improvised on account of the long preparatory study they require. Visiting the poor, may, on the contrary, be set about without delay : all that is necessary is to ask the parish priest, the Sister of Charity, or benevolent people, for the names of a few poor families,

to go and see them with some help, to examine their position, to talk with them, and the apprenticeship is at once finished. It is therefore, expedient that this precious work should be organised without loss of time; a work that may be done by all, that requires neither too much time, nor much learning, nor much personal exertion, and which may justly be called the daily bread of charity.

A very important point to be settled without delay is the regular weekly recurrence of the meetings. If conferences meet but at long intervals, it will be found much more difficult to impart to the members that uniformity of feeling and views with which alone a Conference can exist; zeal will constantly flag; for no work is carried out, cheerfully and regularly, that does not frequently engage us, and the interests of the poor will suffer.

Another still more important point is to open and close the meetings with the usual prayers, and to establish the custom of making a collection, conducted with inviolable secrecy; indeed without prayer, we should run the risk of forgetting that we meet in the name of Jesus Christ, and that we can have no merit but His; without absolute secrecy in making the collection, or with the principle of *fixed contribution for members*, we should deprive ourselves of one of the most precious merits of almsgiving, that of joining humility with sacrifice.

When all these preparatory measures are completed, the Conference is founded, and must rely on the grace of God, on the zeal of the brothers, and on time, for future extension. It may then notify its existence to the Council-General, and solicit its aggregation, which

will extend to it the spiritual favours granted so liberally to the Society by the Sovereign Pontiffs. The petition should be made without any set formality, in the simple and homely way that characterizes our dealings and correspondence; it will suffice to make known to the Council-General the following points, entering of course, into all details likely to interest or edify it (1).

1. Name of the Conference;
2. Date of foundation;
3. Composition of the Board and addresses of its members;
4. Names and professions of other members;
5. Days and places of meetings
6. Works adopted;
7. Relations with the clergy;
8. Adoption of the General Rule.

In order to facilitate the regular transmission of such documents, but by no means from a vain liking for formality, a form of petition for aggregation has been

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(1) The letter should be addressed to the President-General or to the Secretary-General or to the Society, 6, rue Furstenberg, Paris. In case the new Conference is established in a Country where there is a Superior or Central Council of the Society, the application should be transmitted by such Council and it should be accompanied by its recommendation.

In regard to Conferences who are not connected with any Council «they should support their demand for aggregation by the recommendations of members of older Conferences, and by those of accredited ecclesiastics ». (Circular of 14th July 1841.)

The Council-General expresses the wish that the cor-

printed, and is sent to the Conferences that are being formed. This form not only procures valuable information for the central Society, instead of leaving useful hints scattered throughout a voluminous correspondence; but it has the far greater merit of calling to mind details to which little importance is attached at the moment, but which, later, one might frequently regret not having at hand.

At length when the aggregation has been pronounced and the Conference duly incorporated into our family of charity, it must then hasten to reap the advantages of such a communion of prayer, works, and thoughts. The General Reports of the General Meetings, those of other Conferences, and the monthly appearance of the *Bulletin*, will quickly unite the new Conference to this vast organization of charity; but nothing will be found so efficacious as frequent correspondence with the Council-General, with the Superior and Central Councils and communication by word or letter with neighbouring Conferences. It is thus, by a mutual communication of thoughts and deeds, and by an interchange of visits, that the first fervour of zeal is kept up, whilst progress is being made in experience and wisdom.

Such are the means that have been employed, up to the present moment, for founding Conferences. This simple notice will, we hope, justify the observation we set out with, and show how easy it is to extend and

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respondents should, as far as possible, refrain from inscribing on the covers of their letters the titles President-General or Secretary-General, when the names of these officials are known; it is contrary to humility to give such titles, when it can be avoided.

multiply the branches of our dear Society. May it contribute to multiply them, to the edification of Catholic youth and to the relief of the poor! May it, by drawing attention to old established rules, contribute to maintain that unity which is the offspring of fraternity; and may it verify the inscription at the head of this instruction : *Deus est qui inhabitare facit unius moris in domo.*

PRAYERS

AT THE OPENING OF THE SITTING

In nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Veni, Sancte Spiritus; Reple tuorum corda fidelium, et tui amoris in eis ignem accende.

Come, O Holy Ghost; fill the hearts of thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of thy love.

V. Emitte Spiritum tuum, et creabuntur;

V. Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. Et renovabis faciem terræ.

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Oremus.

Let us pray.

Deus, qui corda fidelium Sancti Spiritus illustratione docuisti, da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere, et de ejus semper consolatione gaudere, per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

O God, who through the light of the Holy Ghost, didst instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Spirit we may relish what is right, and ever enjoy his consolation, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Ave, Maria, etc.

v. Cor Jesu sacratissimum.
R. Miserere Nobis.
v. Regina sine labe concepta.
R. Ora pro nobis.
v. Sancte Vincenti a Paulo.
R. Ora pro nobis.
In nomine Patris, etc.

Hail Mary, etc.

v. Sacred Heart of Jesus,
R. Have mercy on us.
v. Queen conceived without sin,
R. Pray for us.
v. Saint Vincent de Paul,
R. Pray for us.
In the name, etc.

THE CLOSING PRAYERS

In nomine Patris, etc.
v. Sancte Joseph,
R. Ora pro nobis.
v. Sancte Vincenti a Paulo.
R. Ora pro nobis.

In the name, etc.
v. St. Joseph,
R. Pray for us.
v. St. Vincent de Paul,
R. Pray for us.

Oremus.

Clementissime Jesu, qui beatum Vincentium flagrantissimæ charitatis tuæ apostolum in Ecclesia suscitasti, effunde super famulos tuos eumdem charitatis ardorem, ut amore tuo libentissime in pauperes impendant sua, et seipsos super impendant; qui cum

Let us pray.

Most gracious Jesus, who didst raise up blessed Vincent for an apostle of Thy most ardent charity in the Church, pour forth upon Thy servants that same fervour of charity, so that, for the love of Thee, they may with a most ready heart bestow their goods

Deo Patre vivis et regnas in unitate Spiritus Sancti Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

upon the poor and still more bestow themselves; who with God the Father livest and reignest in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God world without end.

R. Amen.

FOR BENEFACTORS

Benefactoribus pauperum gratiam largiri dignare, piissime Jesu, qui impertituris misericordiam in nomine tuo centuplum regnumque coeleste promisisti. Amen.

To the benefactors of the poor vouchsafe Thy grace O most loving Jesus, who hast promised a hundred fold and a heavenly kingdom to those who do works of mercy in Thy name.

R. Amen.

Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei Genitrix; nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus; sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

R. Amen.

Et fidelium animæ per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace.

And may the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace.

R. Amen.

In nomine Patris, etc.

In the name, etc.

A PRAYER FOR THE USE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

According to the terms of the Brief of our Holy Father Pope Pius IX, of the 13th September, 1859, an indulgence of 300 days *is granted to the members and benefactors of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, each time they recite this prayer.*

Gratias agimus tibi, Domine, qui Societatem sancti Vincentii a Paulo tot ac tantis hactenus benedictionibus cumulare dignatus es.

Hanc igitur nobis dilectissimam Societatem precamur usque respicias, sed et singulas illius partes et eam imprimis cui adscribimur. Fac, quæsumus, ut propagetur ubique et in perpetuum confirmetur, vigente semper eodem, qui fuit ab initio, pietatis, simplicitatis et fraternæ dilectionis affectu ita ut illius opera, ab anni prorsus terrestri fœnore et cupiditate libera,

We thank Thee, O Lord, for the many and great blessings which thou hast been pleased to bestow upon the Society of St. Vincent de Paul up to the present time.

We beg of Thee still graciously to look down upon this Society, which is so dear to us, upon its several branches, and, in particular, upon that one to which we belong. Grant that it may be everywhere extended and forever confirmed; the spirit of mercy, of simplicity, and of brotherly love continuing, as from the beginning, to animate it so that its undertakings being

magis ac magis in Cœlum fecundentur.

Scis ipse, Domine quam multis indigeant tum spiritualibus tum temporalibus bonis familia pauperum, quibus pro parte, exigua nimis, opitulamur. Scis et quam multis ipsi indigeamus. Miserere nostri, Domine, et infinitam misericordiam tuam omnes pariter sentiamus.

Nostris quoque fratribus qui eodem nobis conjunguntur sodalitio, si qui variis nunc premuntur angustiis, subveni, piissime Deus. Infunde illis fortitudinem, prudentiam, pacem et in fiduciam quæ a te sunt, Nostræ et illorum ærumnæ, patienter pro Christo toleratæ, tibi sint acceptæ et in salutem fructificient.

Fusis tandem precibus te, Domine, per merita

wholly free from all worldly interest and cupidity, may become more and more fruitful for Heaven.

Thou Thyself knowest, O Lord, in how many ways the poor families which we endeavour, however feebly, to assist, are lacking both in spiritual and temporal goods. Thou knowest also in how many things we ourselves are lacking. Have mercy on us, O Lord, and let all equally experience Thine infinite mercy.

Help also, O most merciful God, any of our brethren of the Society who may now be suffering sundry trials. Grant them that fortitude, prudence, peace, and confidence, which are Thine. May their afflictions and our own, patiently endured for Christ's sake, be acceptable to Thee and fruitful unto salvation.

Finally, having poured out our prayers to Thee,

Domini nostri Jesu Christi, specialemque beatæ Mariæ et santi Vincentii intercessionem deprecamur, ut solutis nostræ mortalitatis vinculis, omnes nobis propinquitate seu necessitudine devinctos, pauperes nobis commissos, carissimosque sodales, regni tui nobiscum facias esse participes. Amen.

O Lord, we beseech Thee, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the special intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of Saint Vincent, that, being freed from the bonds of our mortality, Thou mayest make our friends and relations, the poor committed to our care, our dearest brothers and ourselves partakers in Thy Kingdom. Amen.

PRAYERS TO IMPLORE THE ASSISTANCE OF THE HOLY GHOST

To be recited pending the election of a President

Veni, Creator Spiritus,
Mentes tuorum visita,
Imple superna gratia
Quæ tu creasti pectora.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come, From Thy bright heavenly throne; Come, take possession of our souls, And make them all thine own.

Qui diceris Paraclitus,
Altissimi donum Dei
Fons vivus, ignis, charitas
Et spiritualis unctio

Thou who art called the Paraclete, Best gift of God above; The Living Spring, the Living Fire Sweet unction and True Love.

Tu septiformis munere,
Digitus paternæ dexteræ,
Tu rite promissum Patris,
Sermone ditans guttura.

Thou who art sevenfold in Thy Grace, Finger of God's right hand; His promise teaching little ones To speak and understand.

Accende lumen sensibus,
Infunde amorem cordibus,
Infirma nostri corporis,
Virtute firmans perpeti.

O! Guide our minds with Thy blest light, With love our hearts inflame, And with Thy strength, which ne'er decays, Confirm our mortal frame.

Hostem repellas longius,
Pacemque dones protinus;
Ductore sic to prævio,
Vitemus omne noxium.

Far from us drive our hellish foe, True peace unto us bring; And through all perils lead us safe, Beneath Thy Sacred Wing.

Per te sciamus da Patrem
Noscamus atque Filium;
Te utriusque Spiritum
Credamus omni tempore.

Throûgh Thee may we the Father know, Through Thee th'Eternal Son, And Thee, the Spirit of them both, Thrice blessed Three in One.

Deo Patri sit gloria,
Et Filio, qui a mortuis,
Surrexit, ac Paraclito,
In sæculorum sæcula.
Amen.

All glory to the Father be, And to His risen Son, The same to Thee, great Paraclete, While endless ages run.
Amen.

V. Emitte Spiritum, tuum, et creabuntur.

V. Send forth thy Spirit and they shall be created.

R. Et renovabis faciem terrae.

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Oremus.

Deus qui corda fidelium Sancti Spiritus illustratione docuisti, da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere, et de

Let us pray.

O God, who hast taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the holy Spirit; grant us

ejus semper consolatione gaudere. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

by the same Spirit to relish what is right, and evermore to rejoice in his consolation, Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

DE PROFUNDIS

To be recited on the death of a Member (Active or Honorary) or Benefactor; as likewise on the death of any of the poor visited by the Conference.

De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine; Domine, exaudi vocem meam.

Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice.

Fiant aures tuæ intendentes in vocem deprecationis meæ.

O let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine; Domine, quis sustinebit?

If Thou, O Lord, shalt observe iniquities; Lord who shall endure it?

Quia apud te propitiatio est, et propter legem tuam sustinui te, Domine.

For with Thee there is merciful forgiveness; and by reason of Thy Law I have waited for Thee, O Lord.

Sustinuit anima mea in verbo ejus; speravit anima mea in Domino.

My soul hath relied on His word; my soul hath hoped in the Lord.

A custodia matutina usque ad noctem, speret Israël in Domino.

From the morning watch even unto night, let Israël hope in the Lord.

Quia apud Dominum misericordia et copiosa apud eum redemptio.

Et ipse redimet Israël ex omnibus iniquitatibus ejus.

V. Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine.

R. Et lux perpetua luceat eis.

V. Requiescant in pace.

R. Amen.

V. Domine, exaudi orationem meam.

R. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.

V. Dominus vobiscum.

R. Et cum spiritu tuo.

Because with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption.

And He shall redeem Israël from all his iniquities.

V. Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord.

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them.

V. May they rest in peace.

R. Amen.

V. O Lord, hear my prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto Thee.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with Thy spirit.

Oremus.

Fidelium, Deus, omnium Conditor et Redemptor, animabus famulorum famularumque tuarum remissionem cunctorum tribue peccatorum, ut indulgentiam, quam semper optaverunt, piis sup-

Let us pray.

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful; grant to the souls of Thy servants departed the remission of all their sins, that by pious supplications they may obtain that pardon which

plicationibus consequantur, qui vivis et regnas in sæcula sæculorum.

R. Amen.

V. Requiescant in pace.

R. Amen.

they have always desired. Who livest and reignest, world without end.

R. Amen.

V. May they rest in peace.

R. Amen.

(The following prayers may be substituted for the above from the words « Let us pray ».)

Absolve, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the soul of Thy Servant, N., that, being dead to this world, he may live to Thee, and whatever sins he has committed in this life, through human frailty, do Thou of Thy most merciful goodness forgive.

Grant, O Lord, that while we here lament the departure of this Thy servant, we may always remember that we are most certainly to follow him.

Give us grace to prepare for that last hour by a good life, that we may not be surprised by a sudden and unprovided death, but ever watching, that when Thou shalt call we may, with the bridegroom, enter into eternal glory. Through Jesus-Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

V May the divine assistance remain always with us.

R. Amen.

V. And may the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. Amen.

PRAYERS THAT MAY BE RECITED BY A BROTHER BEFORE LEAVING HOME TO VISIT HIS CASES

O Almighty God, direct our actions according to Thy Divine Will, that in the name of Thy beloved Son we may abound in good works.

Prevent, we beseech Thee, O Lord, our actions by Thy gracious assistance, that every prayer and work of ours may begin always from Thee, and through Thee may be happily ended. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

ACT OF CONSECRATION OF COUNCILS AND CONFERENCES OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS (1)

Lord Jesus, Who seeing the cold indifference of the world, and in order to revive charity amongst men, has unveiled before them Thy Sacred Heart and revealed the infinite riches of the divine love, behold us prostrate before Thee, we who form only one Family by the bond of fraternal charity, scattered, it is true, throughout the world, but united under the Standard of St. Vincent de Paul, and forming only one body and one soul in the common spirit of the apostolate of charity; we

(1) This act of Consecration, draw up at the request of the Council-General, by R. P. Matignon, S. J., was read for the first time at Montmartre on 21st November 1889. The Society had been solemnly consecrated to the Sacred Heart from 5th February 1872. This consecration is renewed each year.

dedicate and consecrate to Thy divine person and to Thy Sacred Heart this our Council (or Conference), and all the members who compose it, the poor whom we visit in Thy name, the youths and children whom we receive in our patronages in order to maintain them in Thy service, in a word, all those of whom we have the care, and all the works we have undertaken in various places for Thy Glory. Quite unworthy though we be, we beseech Thee to receive this offering in the odour of sweetness; inflame us with that fire which from the depths of Thy Heart Thou desirest to see burning more and more each day, in order that filled with the tenderness of Thy Heart, we may learn to despise things here below, to love our brethren, to help our neighbour by word and example, and that, amongst the vicissitudes of this world, we may fix our hearts on the riches and happiness that shall never end.

BRIEF

OF HIS HOLINESS GREGORY XVI

GREGORY XVI PP.

To be held in perpetual remembrance.

It is meet that the Roman Pontiff should especially enrich with the heavenly stores of the Church those pious Societies of men who earnestly and diligently employ themselves in the performance of the works of Christian charity. We have, therefore, deemed it our duty willingly to yield assent to the pious entreaties of the President and members of the General Council of the Society of St.. Vincent de Paul, first instituted at Paris, who have earnestly besought us to grant to this Society certain Indulgences, both plenary and partial.

GREGORIUS PP. XVI.

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Romanum decet Pontificem cœlestibus Ecclesiæ thesauris eas præsertim pias hominum Societates ditare, quæ in Chrietianœ charitatis, operibus obeundis omni cura, studioque versantur. Itaque cum Præses et Consultores generales Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo, Parisiis primum institutæ, enixis precibus a Nobis flagitaverint, ut nonnullas indulgentias tum plenarias tum partiales ipsi Societati concedere velimus, Nos libenti animo piis eorum precibus adnuendum censuimus.

Wherefore, we mercifully grant in the Lord's name, a Plenary Indulgence and remission of their sins, to all and every one belonging to the General Council of the said Society now instituted at Paris or attached to the particular councils of Paris and of other cities, who being truly penitent, having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, shall have been present at all the meetings of the Council held during the month, or at three out of the four.

Quapropter omnibus et singulis ad Consilium generale Societatis institutum, pertinentibus, vel addictis Consiliis Particularibus arisiorum et aliarum civitatum vere pœnitentibus et confessis, ac sacra communione refectis, dummodo omnibus, vel tribus ex quatuor Consilii cœtibus in mense habitas interfuerint, plenariam peccatorum suorum Indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus.

Also to all termed (as they are active members of the said Society; and also to members of the Councils and others, of whom mention hath been made, and who may have obtained the aforesaid Indulgence, we likewise grant a Plenary Indulgence, on condition of their being truly penitent, confessing their sins, receiving Holy Communion,

Item omnibus ipsius Societatis sociis, ut dicunt activis, necnom consultoribus, et aliis, de quibus habita mentio est,, qui commemoratum Indulgentiam ibi jam fuerint assecuti, dummodo omnibus, vel tribus ex quituor conventibus, seu Conferentiis in mense habitis interfuerint, ac vere pœnitentes, et confessi, sanctissimum Eucharistiæ sacramentum sump-

and being present at all or at three out of four of the Conferences or meetings held during the month.

serint, plenariam similiter Indulgentiam largimur.

Moreover, we, in like manner, grant a Plenary Indulgence, to be obtained for all admitted into the said Society, on the day on which they shall, be received into any active degree, whether of aspirant member, or ordinary member of any Particular Council (1) or member of the General Council, being truly penitent, having confessed their sins, and received Holy Communion.

Præterea eadem pariter plenariam Indulgentiam tribuimus ab omnibus in prædictam Societatem cooptandis acquirendam quo die vere pariter pœnitentes, et confessi, ac S. communione refecti ab eadem Societate in diversis gradibus activis membri aspirantis, Membri ordinarii Consultoris particularis, et Consultoris generalis recepti fuerint.

Moreover, we further grant a Plenary Indulgence to all, both active and honorary members of the said Society who, on the Festivals of the Immaculate Conception of the

Insuper omnibus Sociis tum activis, tum honorariis commemoratæ Societatis, qui diebus festis Immaculæ Conceptionis B. Mariæ Virginis, et S. Vincentii a Paulo, et Do-

(1) At this time by Particular Councils was understood all other Councils besides the Council-General. Brief 12th August, 1845. «Consilia particularia provinciarum sive urbium. »

Blessed Virgin Mary, of St. Vincent de Paul, and on the second Sunday after Easter (which is the anniversary of the translation of the relics of St. Vincent), also on the Monday after the First Sunday in Lent, being truly penitent, and having confessed their sins, shall receive Holy Communion at the Mass which on the aforesaid days is celebrated for the Society, and shall have been present at the general meeting which is held on those occasions.

minica secunda post Pascha, quæ est anniversaria dies translationis reliquiarum ejusdem S. Vincentii, æque ac feria secunda post Dominicam primam Quadragesimæ, vere peonitentes et confessi sacram synaxim exceperint in Missa quæ prædictis diebus pro Societate celebratur, atque cœtui generali, qui his temporibus habetur, interfuerint, plenariam pariter Indulgentiam impertimur.

And also we, in like manner, grant a Plenary Indulgence to all members and benefactors of this Society, at the hour of death, who, being truly penitent and confessing their sins, or, should circumstances prevent their doing this, being at least contrite, shall with their lips, or if unable so to do shall in their hearts, devoutly invoke the Holy

Atque etiam Sociis omnibus et Societatis benefactoribus in mortis articulo constitutis, si vere peonitentes et confessi, vel quatenus id facere nequiverint, saltem contriti nomen Jesu ore si potuerint, sin minus corde devote invocaverint, et mortem tanquam peccati stipendium de manu Domini, patienti atque alacri animo susceperint, plenariam si-

Name of Jesus, and shall with a patient and ready mind accept death from the hand of the Lord as a penality for sin.

We moreover, in the customary form of the Church, remit in favour of all active members of the said Society, seven years and the like number of forty days of the penances enjoined to them, or in any way otherwise due by them; as often as they, with at least a contrite heart, shall visit any Conference or poor family, or the schools or workshops of the poor, or shall perform any other good work in accordance with the object of the said Society. Which partial Indulgence every individual active member of the said Society can obtain as often as with a contrite heart he shall assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass,

militer Indulgentiam concedimus.

Ad haec Sociis omnibus activis ejusdem Societatis, quotiescumque, corde saltem contrito, aliquam conferentiam aliquam pauperem familiam, aut scholas, officinasque pauperum visitaverint, vel quodcumque aliud bonum opus juxta mentem dictæ Societatis praestiterint, septem annos, ac totidem quadragenas de injunctis eis, seu alias quomodolibet debitis penitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus. Quam quidem partialem Indulgentiam singuli Socii activi memoratæ Societatis lucrari poterunt, quotiescumque corde conpro anima alicujus Socii celebrando adstiterint, et trito sacro Missæ sacrificio quoties corpora pauperum

when celebrated for the soul of any member, and as often as he shall follow the bodies of the poor to ecclesiastical interment.

We further allow all or any of these Indulgences, remissions of sins, and relaxations of penances, to be applied by way of suffrage to the souls of Christ's faithful who have departed this life in charity with God.

And finally by the same our Apostolical Authority, we grant and extend all and every one of the above-mentioned Indulgences to all other, whether Councils or Conferences, of the same Society established with the approbation of the Council-General, whether by itself or by the particular Councils of towns or provinces already established by it. Also to members who live in places where as yet no Conference exists, provided that in these places they

ad Ecclesiasticam sepulturam fuerint prosecuti.

Quas omnes, et singulas Indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones, ac poenitentiarum relaxationes etiam animabus Christi fidelium, quæ Deo in charitate conjunctæ ab hac vita migraverint, per modum suffragii applicari posse indulgemus.

Denique omnibus aliis sive Consiliis, sive Conferentiis ejusdem Societatis, quæ approbante Consilio generali instituuntur, sive ab eodem, sive a Consiliis particularibus civitatum, aut provinciarum ab ipso jam institutis, item Sociis, qui degunt in locis, in quibus nondum viget conferentia, omnes et singulas commemoratas Indulgentias, si in locis eisdem praestiterint veluti poterunt consueta opera, aliasque praescriptas conditiones impleverint, eadem

shall perform as far as they can the customary works, and fulfil the other prescribed conditions.

Notwithstanding our own and our Apostolic Chancery's Rule concerning not granting Indulgences *ad instar*, and other Apostolic constitutions and ordinances and any other things whatsoever to the contrary.

It is our pleasure also that copies of these present letters, whether manuscript or printed, having the sign manual of the properly constituted ecclesiastical authorities, shall possess the same authority, and have the same respect paid to them as if these present themselves were exhibited or shown.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, under the Fisherman's Ring, the tenth day of January, 1845, the fourteenth year of our Pontificate.

A. Card. LAMBRUSCHINI.

Place of the seal.

Autorictate Nostra Apostolica concedimus, atque elargimur.

Non obstantibus Nostra, et Cancellariæ Apostolicæ regula de non concedendis Indulgentiis *ad instar*, aliisque Constitutionibus et Ordinationibus Apostolicis, caeterisque contrariis quibuscumque.

Volumus autem, ut præsentium Litterarum transsumptis, seu exemplis etiam impressis manu personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ subscriptis eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhibeetur, ipsis præsentibus, si forent exhibitæ, vel ostensæ.

Datum Romæ apud sanctum Petrum sub annulo Piscatoris, die X Januarii, MDCCCXLV Pontificatus Nostri anno decimo quarto.

A. Card. LAMBRUSCHINI.

Locus Sigilli.

SUPPLEMENTARY BRIEF

GREGORY XVI POPE

To be held in perpetual remembrance.

Whereas we have learned that the Society established under the auspices and name of St. Vincent de Paul, and devoted to the exercise of works of Christian charity is an eminent degree advancing the good of religion and the welfare of the faithful, and in order that the said Society may daily make new progress, we have determined to enrich with the Heavenly Treasures of the Church all such as shall bestow their care and wealth to the furtherance of the Society aforesaid, to the end that by the spiritual advantages held out to them their zeal may be more enkindled.

Wherefore we mercifully grant in the Lord's

GREGORIUS PP. XVI.

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Quum Societatem sub auspiciis et nomine S. Vincentii a Paulo institutam Christianæ charitatis operibus exercendis intentam Religionis tbono, et fidelium commoditati præclare noverimus inservire, ut ea nova in dies incrementa suspiciat, de cœlestibus Ecclesiæ thesauris eos omnes ditandos censuimus, qui ad juvandam Societatem ipsam curas suas, opesque contulerint, ut hoc illorum studium spiritualibus propositis gratiis magis magisque, exardescat.

Itaque omnibus et singulis Christi fidelibus

Name a Plenary Indulgence and remission of sins once each month to all and every one of the faithful, whether men or women, who shall give to the Council General a fixed and regular amount of alms, provided they be truly penitent, confess their sins, and receive the Holy Communion.

Moreover, we grant an Indulgence of seven years and as many quarantains once each month to all the faithful, whether men or women, who shall give a like fixed and regular amount to the Particular Councils of the Provinces or Towns, established by the Council General.

And further we grant an Indulgence of one year obtainable likewise once each month by such of the faithful, men or women, who shall in writing or otherwise engage to pay to Conferences approved by the Council General,

utriusque sexus, qui eleemosynam fixam, et constantem ad Consilium generale transmittent, vere pœnitentibus, et confessi, et sacra communione refectis plenariam peccatorum suorum indulgentiam, et remissionem semel in mense misericorditer in Domino elargimur.

Praeterea omnibus utriusque sexus Christi fidelibus, qui hujusmodi fixam, et constantem eleemosynam transmittent ad consilia particularia, provinciarum, sive urbium a Consilio generali instituta, Indulgentiam septem annorum, et totidem quadragenas semel in mense concedimus.

Insuper utriusque sexus Christi fidelibus, qui seu per Chirographum, seu alio quocumque modo spondeant, se aliquam eleemosynam fixam, et constantem collaturos Conferentiis adprobatis, vel a Consilio Generali vel a

or by Particular Councils, approved by the Council-General, any fixed and regular contribution.

Lastly, we bestow on all and every one of the faithful, whether men or women, an Indulgence of seven years and as many quarantines, obtainable once each month on the days on which they collect in aid of the Councils, whether General or Particular.

All this, notwithstanding our own and the Apostolic Chancery's Rule concerning not granting Indulgences *ad Instar*, and other Apostolic Constitutions and Ordinances, or any other things whatsoever to the contrary.

It is our pleasure also that copies of these present letters, whether manuscript or printed, having the sign manual of the properly constituted ecclesiastical authorities, shall possess the same authority

Consiliis particularibus, ad hoc delegatis, indulgentiam unius anni semel pariter in mense lucrandam elargimur.

Denique omnibus, et singulis Christi fidelibus utriusque sexus, Indulgentiam septem annorum, et totidem quadragenarum semel in mense lucrandam impertimur iis scilicet diebus, quibus pro Consiliis, generali vel particularibus, stipem emendicando collegerint.

Non obstantibus Nostra, et Cancellariæ Apostolicæ Regula de non concedendis Indulgentiis *ad instar*, aliisque Constitutionibus, et Ordinationibus Apostolicis caeterisque contrariis quibuscumque.

Volumus autem, ut praesentium Litterarum transsumptis, seu exemplis, etiam impressis, manu personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ subscriptis eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhibere-

and have the same respect paid to them as if the original were exhibited or shown.

Given at Rome, at St. Mary Major's, under the Fisherman's Ring, the 12th day of August, 1845, the fifteenth year of our Pontificate.

A. Card. LAMBRUSCHINI, Bishop of Sabina.

Place of the Seal.

tur, ipsis præsentibus si forent exhibitæ vel ostensæ.

Datum Romæ apud S. Mariam Majorem, sub annulo Piscatoris, die XII Augusti MDCCCXLV, Pontificatus Nostri anno decimo quinto.

A. Card. LAMBRUSCHINI. Ep. Sabinensis.

Locus Sigilli.

BRIEF
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS IX

ACCORDING AU EXTENSION OF INDULGENCES

PIUS PP, IX

To be held in perpetual remembrance.

The members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul having made known to us that the Apostolic See had formerly granted a Plenary Indulgence on the Feast of the Immacu-

PIUS PP. IX.

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Exponendum nobis curarunt sodales Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo nuncupatæ, ipsis jam alias ab hac Apostolica Sede Plenariam Indulgentiam diebus festis Conceptionis B.

late Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and on that of St. Vincent de Paul, but on condition of being gained at the Mass celebrated on both these days for the Society itself, have presented us with a humble petition, begging that we would give greater extent to this first favour of the Apostolic See. Desirous then of acceding to these pious desires for the spiritual good of the faithful, in virtue of our Apostolic power, and confiding in the mercy of Almighty God, and by the authority of the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, we give and grant by these presents to all and each one of the members of the said Society, provided they faithfully fulfil the conditions prescribed, the Plenary Indulgence annexed to the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, either on the the day of the Feast it-

Mariæ Virginis Immaculatæ ac ejusdem sancti Vincentii Paulani fuisse concessam, non aliter tamen nisi intra missæ actionem quæ hisce diebus pro ipsa Societate celebrari solet lucrifaciendam. Quamobren a nobis humiliter petierunt, ut hanc Sedis Apostical concessionem extendere quod-ammodo dignaremur. Nos igitur piis hisce precibus quæ in spirituale Christi fidelium bonum cedunt benigne annuere volentes, Auctoritate Apostolica, deque Omnipotentis Dei misericordia ac BB. Petri et Pauli Apostolorum ejus auctoritate confusi, omnibus et singulis præfatæ Societatis sodalibus, ut Plenarium Indulgentiam festivitate Conceptionis B. Mariæ Virginis Immaculatæ lucrifaciendam, vel ipsa festivitate, vel sicubi transfertur die quo ibidem celebratur; Plenariam Indulgentiam vero die festo S. Vincentii Paulani concessam eodem

self, or on the day to which the festival happens to be transferred. And as to the Plenary Indulgence granted for the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, we grant that it may be gained either on the day itself or on any day within the seven following days; that is to say, once within the eight days. But it is our pleasure, that in Paris the aforesaid Indulgences can be gained only at the Masses which are celebrated in the presence of the Relics of St. Vincent de Paul, and this even if these Masses be not offered for the Society. And it is our pleasure that the manuscript or printed copies of these present letters signed by a public notary, and furnished with the seal of a person of ecclesiastical dignity, shall obtain the same faith and the same effect as the originals themselves, if they were produced and shown.

die, ac septem continuis diebus immediate sequentibus, una tantum vice hujus octidui spatio ad unius cujusque sodalis libitum eligenda, lucrari possint ac valeant; dummodo injuncta omnia ad eas consequendas rite adimpleant, tenore præsentium concedimus et impertimur; in contrarium facientibus non obstantibus quibuscumque. Volumus autem ut præfatæ Indulgentiæ Parisiis tantum intra Missarum solemnia quæ ante Sacras Corporis Vincentii a Paulo reliquias, etsi non pro Societate celebreatur lucro esse possint utque præsentium Litterarum transsumptis seu exemplis etiam impressis manu alicujus Notarii publici subscriptis, et sigillo Personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ munitis eadem prorsus habeatur fides, quæ ipsis pre son titres taberetur exhibitæ ostensæve forent.

These are to stand good for all times.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, the 18th of March, 1853, the seventh year of our Pontificate.

For His Eminence,
Card : LAMBRUSCHINI,
J.-B. BRANCALEONI-
CASTELLANI. *Substitute.*

Præsentibus perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum, sub annulo Piscatoris, die XVIII Martii MDCCCLIII, Pontificatus Nostri anno septimo.

Pro Dno
Card. LAMBRUSCHINI,
J.-B. BRANCALEONI,
CASTELLANI, Subst :

BRIEF
OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX

GRANTING INDULGENCES TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, WHO ATTEND SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

PIUS PP. IX

To be held in perpetual remembrance.

Whereas our well-beloved sons, the President-General and the members of the Council-General of

PIUS PP. IX.

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Exponendum nobis curarunt dilecti Filii, Præses generalis et Consiliarii Societatis S. Vincentii a

the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, established in Paris, have thought it advisable to represent to us that the members of that Society were in the pious habit of coming together every year for the purpose of attending in a body to spiritual exercises, and have addressed to us a humble prayer to promote this custom, by bestowing upon the piety of the Brotherhood the heavenly gifts of the Church, of which it has pleased the Most High to make us the dispensers, in order that that custom may spread far and wide, and yield to the faithful most abundant fruits; and whereas we on our part highly commend this salutary and profitable custom and desiring ardently that it should grow daily more and more into use, we have deemed it fit and advisable to comply with the pious request. Wherefore by the autho-

Paulo, Lutetiæ Parisiorum institutæ, ejusdem Societatis sodales spiritualibus exercitiis gregatim quotannis vacare pie consuevisse, qui quidem mos ut longe lateque propagetur, ac in uberiorem Christi fidelium fructum cedat, humiles nobis preces admoverunt ut hanc sodalium pietatem cœlestium Ecclesiæ munerum, quorum dispensatores Nos voluit Altissimus, elargitione juvaremus. Nos itaque salubrem frugiferamque hujusmodi consuetudinem in Domino commendantes, utque magis in dies magisque invaleat ex animo optantes, piis hisce votis annuendum censuimus. Quamobrem Auctoritate nobis a Domino tradita, deque omnipotentis Dei misericordia ac B.B. Petri et Pauli Apostolorum ejus auctoritate confisi, omnibus et singulis præfatæ Societatis sodalibus, qui spiritualibus hujusmodi exercitiis, sic ut

rity entrusted to us by Our Lord, and relying upon the mercy of the Almighty God, and by the authority of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, we grant a Plenary Indulgence and remission of sins to all the members in general, and every one of them in particular of the Society aforesaid, who shall have devoutly attended the whole course of spiritual exercises, such as they have been represented to us, and who, being truly penitent, shall have confessed their sins and received the Communion at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on the last day of these exercises, and moreover have addressed fervent prayers to God for peace and concord among Christian princes, for the rooting out of heresies and the exaltation of the Holy Mother Church. To those again who, with a truly contrite heart have at-

præfertur haberi solitis singulis diebus devote interfuerint, vereque pœnitentes et confessi in postremo horum dierum Missæ sacrificio sacra sese communione refecerint, ac pro Christianorum principum concordia, hæresum extirpatione, ac S. Matris Ecclesiæ exaltatione pias ad Deum preces effuderint, plenarium omnium peccatorum suorum indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus. Qui vero corde saltem contriti eorumdem spiritualium exercitiorum partem tantum absolverint, ac ut supra oraverint, centum dies de injunctis eis seu alias quomodolibet debitis peonitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus. Quas omnes et singulas Indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones ac pœnitentiarum relaxationes, etiam animabus Christi fidelium quæ Deo in charitate conjunctæ ad hac luce migraverint, per mo-

tended only a part of the above exercises, and have said the prayers above indicated, we remit one hundred days penance, either laid upon them by the Church in the usual way, or in other way whatsoever incurred. We concede, also, that all and every one of the above Indulgences, remissions of sins, and abatements of penances, be likewise made applicable, by way of suffrage, to the souls of the faithful who have departed this life in peace with God. These presents to be available for all the time to come, anything whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, under the Fisherman's Seal, the 18th day of March, 1854, the eighth year of our Pontificate.

For His Eminence
Card. LAMBRUSCHINI,
J.-B. BRANCALEONI,
CANCELL, Subst.

dum suffragii applicari posse indulgemus. In contrarium facientibus, non obstantibus quibuscumque præsentibus perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum sub annulo. Piscatoris, die XVIII Martii MDCCCLIV. Pontificatus Nostri anno octavo.

Pro Dno.
Card. LAMBRUSCHINI,
J.-B BRANCALEONI,
CANCELL, Subst.

BRIEF
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS IX

Attaching fresch Indulgences to the recitation of certain prayers either by the members of the Society or by the poor families whom they visit.

PIUS IX, POPE.

To be held in perpetual remembrance.

The General Council of the pious Society which takes its name from St. Vincent de Paul, and meets in Paris, has informed us that by Letters Apostolic of the month of January, A.D. 1845, a Plenary Indulgence was granted on the usual conditions to each and every member of the said Society in every year on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and on the first Monday in Lent. Also by virtue of the same letters, the aforesaid faith-

PIUS PP. IX.

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Renuntiandum curavit Nobis Summum Consilium quod Parisiis consistit, piæ Societatis cui a S, Vincentio a Paulo nomen factum, Apostolicis Litteris Januario mense Anno MDCCCLXV datis, omnibus et singulis e dicta Societate Christi fidelibus plenariam Indulgentiam quotannis festivitate Immaculatæ Conceptionis Dieparæ Virginis Mariæ, et feria secunda, quæ prima occurrat in quadragesima, sub assuetis conditionibus lucrifaciendam fuisse concessam; deinde earumdem Litterarum vi, veniam

ful were allowed to gain a similar Plenary Indulgence on certain feasts of the Society, if having complied with the usual conditions they should be present at a Mass whose celebration had been procured by the Society.

Now, however, that we have learned from the said Council that it would better suit the members of the Society if the first and second Plenary Indulgences which we have mentioned were transferred to another day, and if the condition of hearing Mass, appended to the last mentioned Plenary Indulgence, were somewhat modified. And that the same Council has moreover petitioned us for new assistance towards gaining eternal salvation for hte whole Society, and for the faithful we, who have at heart, in a special manner, such Societies of the faithful as relieve the temporal wants of the poor

factam ut suprascripti fideles plenariam pariter consequi cum Domino possent, si statis Sodalitii festis, cæteris pietatis operibus rite absolutis, Sacro adstarent quod jussu Sodalitii ejusdem celebraretur.

Jam vero, cum ab eodem Consilio relatum modo sit Nobis, magis e re Sodalium fore, si prima atque altera ex plenariis Indulgentiis, quas memoravimus, in alium diem traducantur, postremæ vero adjecta opera audiendi Sacrum aliqua ex parte immutetur, supplicatumque prætere a ut novis ad salutem æternam præsidiis tam universum Sodalitium, quam fideles suæ curæ creditos munire de Apostolica Nostra Auctoritate dignaremun. Nos, qui ea præsertim fidelium Sodalitia cordi habmeus quæ, dum egenos præsenti ope juvant, eorum animos ad virtutem comparant, informant, piis hujusmodi votis

and at the same time instruct their minds and incline them to virtue, have willingly resolved to comply with their pious wishes.

Wherefore relying on the mercy of Almighty God, and by the authority of His Holy Apostles S.S. Peter and Paul, we extend to the Sunday immediately following the Feast the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary the Plenary Indulgence which the members of the said Society could hereto fore gain on the Feast itself, provided that the said Feast does not fall on Sunday, or is not transferred in any district to another Sunday. So that the members of the aforesaid Society shall be able to gain, at their option, a Plenary Indulgence, either on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, or on the Sunday immediately following. In like manner, by virtue of the annuendum ultro censuimus.

Quamobrem de Omnipotentis Dei misericordia ac B. B. Petri et Pauli Apostolorum ejus auctoritate confisi, plenariam quidem Indulgentiam quam dicti Sodales festivate Immaculatæ Conceptionis Beatæ Mariæ Virginis lucrari possunt, dummodo idem festum in Dominicam non cadat, cel aliculi in aliam Dominicam emendetur ad Dominicam proxime subsequentem extendimus, sic ut prædicti Sodales plenariam Indulgentiam vel in festo Immaculatæ Conceptionis, vel in Dominica proxime subsequenti lucrari pro suo libito valel ant ; item plenariam Indulgentiam memorata feria secunda eisdem concessam in Dominicam immediate antecedentem, cæteris omnibus

present letters, we transfer the Plenary Indulgence granted on the aforesaid Monday to the Sunday immediately preceding, all other conditions remaining the same.

Besides, lest a dearth of priests should anywhere stand in the way, we permit, by these present letters, that if the members of the same Society all together, even though the celebration of Mass shall not have been procured by the Society, they may nevertheless gain a Plenary Indulgence in the Lord by fulfilling all the other conditions.

servatis, tenore præsentium transferimus.

Præterea, ne quo in loco Sacerdotum penuria impedimento sit, per presentes impertumus, ut ilidem Sodales quamquam Missæ Sacrificio simul congregati adstiterint, quod minime jubente Sodalitio celebratur tamen, si reliqua omnia rite præstiterint, plenariam æque cum D o m i n o consequantur,

Moreover, to each and every member of the faithful of either sex, who are relieved by the aid and exertion of the said Society of St. Vincent de Paul, we from the plenitude of the same Apostolic power mercifully grant in the Lord a Plenary Indulgence and remission of all their sins,

Deinde de ejusdem Auctoritatis Apostolicæ plenitudine omnibus et singulis utruisque sexus Christi fidelibus, quibus eadem Societas a Sancto Vincentio a Paulo nuncupata ope et opera suppetias fert, vere pœnitentibus, et confessis, ac sacra Communione refectis, qui quam libet Ecclesiam seu Oratorium

on the feast of Christmas on the Feast of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary from the first vespers and on the day which terminates the yearly retreat; provided that, truly penitent, they shall have confessed their sins and receive Holy Communion and shall likewise devoutly visit some Church or public oratory, and pour forth pious prayers to God for peace among Christian princes, the extirpation of heresies, and the exaltation of Our Holy Mother Church, such visit to be made on the concluding day of the yearly retreat between the rising and setting of the sun. In

publicum festivitatis D. N. J. C., die festo S. Josephi, B. M. V. Sponsi a primis Vesperis; die vero, quo spiritualis, quem vocant, recessus quotannis absolvitur ab ortu usque ad occasum solis dierum hujus-modi devote visitavenorum principum concorrint, ibique pro Christiadie, hæresum extirpatione ac Sanctæ Matris Ecclesiæ exaltatione pias ad Deum preces effuderiain, quo die præfatorum id egerint, plenariam omnium peccatorum suorum Indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus.

In fine, for each and every member of the faithful connected in any way with this pious Society or benefactors to the same, we remit, in the usual form of the Church, three hundred days of penance, whether enjoined or otherwise due,

Denique omnibus et singulis Christi fidelibus pio huic Sodalitio quocumque tandem nomine adductis, vell benefactoribus, quoties corde saltem contriti propriam Sodalitii precationem, cujus oxordium; « *Gratias agimus tibi,*

as often as they shall, with a contrite heart, recite in any language the special prayer of the Society which b e g i n s, « We thank thee of Lord for the many and great blessings which thou has been pleased to bestow upon the Society of St. Vin. de Paul.

Deus, qui Societatem S. Vincentii a Paulo, etc. » quovis idiomate recitaverint, tercentum dies;

And for every one relieved by the said Society, we relax one hundred days of penançe as often as, with a contrite heart, alone or with their families, they shall recite in any language the Lord's Prayer and Angelical Salutation, adding « Queen conceived without original sin, pray for us. St. Vincent de Paul, pray for us.

Universis vero quibus dicta Societas opitulatur, si corde saltem contriti, aut soli, aut cum suis, Orationem Dominicam et Salutationem Angelicam, adjecta quocumque pariter idiomate invocatione hujusmodi : « *Regina sine labe. originali. concepta, ora .pro nobis; Sancte Vincentii a Paulo, ora pro nobis,*» rcitaverint, qua vice id egerini, century dies de injunctis, sen lias quomodolibet debitis pœnitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus.

We permit all these indulgences to be applied by way of suffrage to the souls of those faithful who

Quas omnes et singulas Indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones, ac pœnitentiarum relaxiones, etiam ani-

departed this life in the friendship of God.

These presents to be available for all time to come, anything whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

We desire that all copies of the present letters, whether in print or manuscript, which shall be signed by some public notary and furnished with the seal of some ecclesiastical dignitary, shall be credited as these present letters themselves.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, September 13th, 1859, in the fourteenth year of our Pontificate.

For His Eminence
Card. MACCHI.
J.-B. BRANCALEONI-CASTELLANI, Deputy,

mabus Christi fidelium, quæe Deo in charitate conjunctæ ab hac luce migraverint, per modum suffragii applicari posse elargiteur.

In contrarium facicatibus non obstantibus quibuscumque, præsentibus perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris.

Volumus autem ut præsentium Litterarum transsumptis seu exemplis etiam impressis, manu alicujus notarii publici subscriptis, et sigillo personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitate constituæ munitis, eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhiberetur ipsis præsentibus, si forent exhibitæ vel ostensæ.

Datum Romæ apud S. Petrum sub annulo Piscatoris die XIII Septembris MDCCCLIX, Pontificatus Nostri anno decimo quarto.

Pro Dno Card. MACCHI,
J. B. BRANALEONI CASTELLANI, *subst.*

BRIEF
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS IX

GRANTING INDULGENCES TO THE FATHERS
AND MOTHERS OF MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY
OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

PIUS IX, POPE.

To be held in perpetual remembrance.

An humble petition has been presented to us in the name of our dear son Adolphus Baudon, President-General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, praying that we would deign, by our Apostolic favour, to extend to the parents of the members of the said Society, all the Indulgences, plenary as well as partial, and the other spiritual favours, hitherto granted to the Society by the Holy Apostolic See.

We, urged by a gracious desire to augment the religon of the faithful and to aid to the salvation of souls by means of the

PIUS PP. IX.

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Supplices nobis admotæ sunt preces nomine dilecti filii Adolphi Baudon hodierni Præsulis Generalis Societatis Sancti Vincentii de Paulo nuncupatæ, ut quæ Indulgentiæ tum plenariæ, tum partiales, aliaque Spirituales gratiæ ab hac Sancta Sede Apostolica concessæ adhuc fuerunt, easdem omnes et singulas propinquis quoque sodalium præfatæ Societatis communicare de benignitate Apostolica dignaremur.

Nos ad augendam fidelium religionem et animarum salutem cælestibus. Ecclesiæ thesauris pia charitate intenti piis hu-

heavenly treasures of the Church, and wishing, with Our Lord's help, to accede, as far as we can, to such pious desires, have resolved to grant, but only to the fathers and mothers mentioned above,, several of the Indulgences already granted to the said Society, and which the members themselves may gain. Wherefore, by the mercy of the all-powerful God, and resting on the authority of the Blessed Peter and Paul, His Apostles, we mercifully grant, in our Lord, a Plenary Indulgence to all fathers and mothers of the present and future members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and to each of them, but only to said fathers and mothers at the moment of death, who, being truly contrite shall have confessed and received Holy Communion, or when they cannot do this, at least, shall have contritely invoked the

jusmodi votis, quantum cum Domino possumus, obsecundare volentes, genitoribus tantum memoratorum sodalium nonnullas ex iis indulgentiis dictæ Societati jam concessis quas ipsi lucrari possunt impertiri decrevimus.

Igitur de Omnipotentis Dei misericordia ac BB. Petri et Pauli, Ap. ejus auctoritate confisi, omnibus et singulis sodalium Societatis S. Vincentii de Paulo nunc et pro tempore existentium genitoribus, tantum in conjuslibet eorum mortis articulo, si vere pœnitentes et confessi ac S. Communione refceti, vel, quatenus id facere nequiverint, saltem contriti nomen Jesu, ore si potuerint, sin minus corde devote invocaverint, plenariam, iisdemque qui singulis diebus exercitiis a dicta sodalitate habendis devote interfue-

name of Jesus with the tongue, when that is possible, or in their hearts, if they can do no more; and, besides, we likewise grant a Plenary Indulgence, and the remission of all their sins, to the same persons, who, each day, shall have assisted devoutly at the spiritual exercises practised by the said Society, and who, on the last day of these exercises, being truly contrite, and having confessed and communicated, shall have assisted at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and offered up pious prayers for concord between Christian princes, for the extirpation of heresy, and the exaltation of our Holy Mother Church.

rint, ac postremo eorumdem die, vere pœnitentes et confessi ac Sacra Communione refecti sacro sancto Missæ sacrificio adstiterint, ac pro Christianorum principum concordia, hæresum extirpatione, peccatorum conversione, ac S. Matris Ecclesiæ exaltatione, pias ad Deum preces effuderint, plenariam similiter omnium peccatorum suorum Indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus.

Moreover, to the faithful herein mentioned, who shall have piously assisted on any day whatever, at the same spiritual exercises, we remit, in the accustomed form of the Church, a hundred days

Insuper præfatis fidelibus supra memoratis, qui quolibet die spiritualibus iisdem exercitiis rite adstiterint, centum dies, et quoties sacro in suffragium alicujus defuncti sodalis celebrando inter-

of the penances which shall have been imposed on them, or which they shall have otherwise incurred in any way; and seven years and seven quarantines, as often as they shall have assisted at a Mass, celebrated for the soul of any deceased member of the said Society, or accompanied to their burial mortal remains of the poor, or performed any other pious and charitable work in conformity with those practised by the said Society. We also grant that all and each of those Indulgences, remissions of sins, and relaxations of penalties may be applied, by way of suffrage, to the souls of the faithful, who have departed this life in the love of our Lord.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, the present brief shall avail in perpetuity. It is our will that there shall be accorded to the written or

fuerint aut pauperum corpora ad sepulturam associaverint, aut quodcumque aliud pietatis vel charitatis opus eidem Societati consentaneum exercuerint, septum annos totidemque quadragenas de injunctis eis, seu alias quomodo libet debitis pœnitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus. Quas omnes et singulas Indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones ac pœnitentiarum relaxationes etiam animabus Christi fidelium quæ Deo in charitate conjunctæ ab hac luce migraverint, per modum suffragii applicari posse impertimur.

In contrarium facientibus, non obstantibus, quibus cunique presentibus perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris. Volumus autem ut præsentium littera-

printed copies of these presents, which shall be certified by the signature of a public notary and attested by the seal of a person constituted in ecclesiastical dignity, the same faith which should be granted to these same presents, if they were exhibited or produced.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, September 5th, 1873, the twenty-eighth year of our Pontificate.

For His Eminence
CARD. ASQUINI,
P. PROFILI, *Deputy.*

The translation is conformable to the Latin text.

D. LUCCIARDI,
Secretary to the Apostolic Nunciature.

Paris, 6 December, 1873.

rum transsumptis seu exemplis, etiam impressis, manu allicujus notarii publici subscriptis et sigillo personæ in ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ munitis eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhiberetur, si forent exhibitæ vel ostensæ.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum, sub annulo Piscatoris, die V. Septembris MDCCCLXXIII Pontificatus Nostri anno vigesmo octavo.

Pro D. CARD. ASQUINO.
F. PROFILI, *Subst.*

Concordat cum originali.

Parisiis, die 6 Decembris 1873.

D. LUCCIARDI,
Secretarius Nunciaturæ Apostolicæ.

PETITION OF THE COUNCIL-GENERAL

AND RESCRIPT OF OUR HOLY FATHER, POPE LÉO XIII

Containing some modifications of the former briefs granting indulgences to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the extension of some of these indulgences.

Most Holy Father — Humbly prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, the President - General, and the members of the Council-General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, earnestly entreat you to deign to modify some of the works of piety prescribed for the members of the said Society to gain Indulgences, and to extend to others the Indulgences already granted to certain persons.

For that purpose they humbly lay before you :

1. That according to the Briefs of the 1st January, 1845, the 18th March, 1853, and the 13th September, 1859,

Beatissime Pater — Ad pedes Sanctitatis Vestræ humiliter provoluti, Præses generalis et Consultores generalis Societatis St. Vincentii a Paulo enixe deprecantur, ut nonnulla pia opera pro lucrandis Indulgentiis a Sodalibus dictæ Societatis injuncta tantisper immutare, et aliquas Indulgentias determinatis personis jam concessas, ad alias benigne extendere dignetur.

Humiliter enim exponunt.

1°. Ex Brevibus, 1 Januarii, 1845, 18 Martii, 1853 et 13 Septembris, 1859, atque ex Rescripto S. Congregationis Indul-

and according to the rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences of the 17th July, 1886, the Plenary Indulgences granted for the four principal Feasts of this Society are subject to various conditions, which very many of the Members either do not correctly understand, or are unable to fulfil on the day fixed, so that they are frequently in danger of not gaining the Indulgences in question.

2. That it appears from the Brief of the 5th of September, 1873, that certain Indulgences were granted to the fathers and mothers of Members, but not to their wives, who nevertheless contribute no less zealously to the welfare of the Society.

After having maturely weighed these considerations, the President and the Members of the Council-General of the Society of St. Vincent de

gentiarum 17 Julii, 1886, Indulgentias eruitur esse quator principalibus festis ejusdem Societatis concessas, variis conditionibus esse subjectas, quas plerique sodales non recte intelligunt, aut easdem die fixo adimplere nequeunt, ita ut saepe saepius in periculo versentur non lucrandi præfatas Indulgentias.

2°. Ex Brevi 5 Septembris, 1873, nonnullas Indulgentias eruituer esse concessas genitoribus Sodalium Societatis, non vero uxoribus, quæ tamen non minori zelo in bonum Societatis operam suam impendunt.

His mature perpensis Præses et Consultores generales Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo S. V. humiliter exorant quatenus :

Paul humbly implore Your Holiness :

1. That Plenary Indulgences already granted for the four principal Feasts of the Society may be gained either on the aforesaid days, or on one of the seven days immediately following them, the privilege remaining in force according to the terms of the Brief of the 18th March, 1853, of gaining the Plenary Indulgence granted for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also on the day to which the solemnity is transferred;

1°. Plenarium Indulgentiam in quatuor diebus, festis principalibus jam concessas, lucrari valeant vel dictis diebus, vel uno ex septem continuis immediate eas sequentibus, firma manente facultate ex Brevi diei 18 Martii, 1853, lucrandi Indulgentiam plenariam pro die festo Immaculatæ Conceptionis B. V. Mariæ concessam, die etiam translatæ solemnitatis;

2. That Members may approach the Holy Table at the Mass they assist at in common, either in the same Church or Chapel, or in several churches or chapels assigned for this intention by the Particular Council of each town;

2°. Præfati Sodales, ad sacram synaxim accedere valeant in missa cui una simul ipsi intersunt sive in eadem ecclesia, vel capella, sive in pluribus a particulari Concilio uniuscujusque civitatis ad hoc designatis;

3. That Members may hold the General Meeting which they are obliged to

3°. Pariter memorati sodales cœtui generali, cui interesse tenentur ad lu-

attend to gain the Indulgences, either on the eve of the Feast from the afternoon, or on the Feast itself, or on one of the seven days immediately following it;

crandas Indulgentias, eidem assistere valeant vel pridie dieif festi tempore vespertino, vel ipso die festo, vel uno ex septem continuis illam immediate sesequentibus;

4. That Members, who, on account of serious illness, or habitual infirmity, are prevented from hearing the Mass in common, or attending the General Meeting, may gain the Indulgences granted to the Members, by performing some other work of piety enjoined upon each by his confessor, and which they will be able to perform in proportion to their strength, in place of the conditions they were bound to fulfil in order to gain the Indulgences;

4°. Tandem sodales, qui gravi morbo laborantes, vel infirma valetudine detenti, impediuntur quominus missam in communi audiant vel cœtui generali intersint lucrari possint Indulgentias consescas sodalibus, adimplendo injuncta eisdem a cujuslibet eorum confessario alia pia opera, quæ ipsi pro viribus præstare poterunt loco earum conditionum, quæ pro acquirendis præfatis Indulgentiis præstare tenebantur;

5. That the Indulgences granted by the Brief of the 5th September, 1873, be extended to the wives of the Members under the same conditions.

5°. Indulgentiæ ex Brevi, 5 Septembris, 1873, concessæ extendantur ad Sodalium uxores sub iisdem conditionibus.

In the audience of His Holiness of the 30th January, 1888.

Our Most Holy Father Pope Leo XIII, has deigned to accede to the request on every point. These presents will be available for all time to come without any issuing of Brief, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

Given at Rome,, at the Secretary's Office of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Relics, 30th January, 1888.

✝ Cajetan,
Card. Aloisi MASELLA,
Prefect.

✝ A., Bishop of Oea,
Secretary.

Seen and approved, Paris, 11th March, 1888.

M. D'HULST,
Vic. Gen.

Ex Audientia Sanctissimi diei 30 Januari, 1888.

Sanctissimus Dnus Nr, Leo Papa XIII, benigne annuit pro gratia in omnibus juxta preces. Præsenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque ullâ Brevis expeditione. Contrariis quibuscumque non stet obstantibus.

Datum Romæ ex Secretaria S. Congregationis Indulgentiis sacrisque Reliquis præpositæ die 30 Januarii, 1888.

✝ CAJETANUS, *Card.*
Aloisi MASELLA,
Præf.

✝ A., Episcopus Oensis,
Secretarius.

Visum et recognitum, Parisiis, die 11 Martii, 1888.

M. D'HULST,
Vic. Generalis.

SUPPLICATION OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL AND RESCRIPT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIII

GRANTING INDULGENCES TO THE PATRONAGES IN CONNECTION WITH THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Most Holy Father,

Humbly prostate at the the feet of your Holiness, the President-General and the Members of the Council-General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, wish to make known to your Holiness that the Society is now recruited not only by members zealously devoted to the works of piety, commonly known as *Conferences*, but also by associates who labour to promote other charitable works, particularly suited to the needs of the present times and generally described under the name of *Patronages*. With regard to the good works practised by the

BEATISSIME PATER,

Ad pedes sanctitatis vestræ humiliter provoluti, præses generalis et Consultores generales Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo Sanctitati Vestræ exponunt eamdem societatem hodiedum non tantum coalescere ex sodalibus, qui pietatis operibus vulgo *Conferences* nuncupatis sedulam navant operam, sed etiam ex sociis qui alia promovent charitatis opera, quæ temporum circumstantiis apprime respondent et patrociniorum nomine vulgo *Patronages* donatur. Opera vero, quæ a sodalibus prædictis exercentur haec præcipua adnumerantur, nimirum :

said Associates, the following is a list of the principal :

1. Conducting children to their parish church.
2. Instituting night and Sunday schools.
3. Assisting the scholars of the Christian schools by means of special marks of encouragement.
4. Teaching catechism to children who are forced to attend secular schools.
5. Placing in safe houses youths apprenticed to learn any trade.
6. Sheltering orphans in Institutions so as to give them a religious and moral training.

Furthermore, the pious work of the Patronages purposes, whenever its funds so permit, establishing the aforesaid good works in extensive premises for the accommodation of the children, apprentices, workmen, and

1° Adducendi pueros ad ecclesiam parochialem.
2° Instituendi scholas vespertinas et dominicales.
3° Fovendi alumnos scholarum Christianarum solemnibus incitamentis.

4° Docendi christianam cathechesim alumnos qui laicas scholas adire cogentur.
5° In tuto collocandi adolescentes, qui tirocinium propriæ artis ineunt.
6° Recipiendi aliquos hospitio pueros parentibus orbatos ut ibi religione ac bonis artibus imbuantur.

Immo hoc pium opus Patrociniorum sibi proponit, quotiescumque rerum angustiæ id non prohibent, stabiliendi præfata pia opera in grandibus ædibus, ad quas accedunt pueri, tirones, operarii, adolescentes, et in

youths. In these special meetings also take place for the fathers of families. Several of these houses are in charge of the institute of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, whose zeal for spiritual improvement of the working classes has long been known.

In this condition of things your petitioners humbly pray your Holiness to grant the Directors of the Patronages united by a decree of the Council-General to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, likewise to the co-operators, whether active or honorary, of the Directors, and also to the children, apprentices, and all the working men of various crafts who will have their names entered in the books of the said Patronages, in order to increase their zeal and piety in furthering the good works above mentioned, the following Indulgences :

quibus etiam cœtus fiunt speciales pro patribus familias para. Plures interdum harum ædium mandantur curæ Fratrum tustituti S. Vincentii a Paulo, quorum zelus in evangelizandis operariis jamdiu innotuit.

Quæ cum ita sint, oratores humiliter rogant Sanctitatem Vestram, ut Rectoribus piorum operum Patrociniorum d e c r e t o Concilii generalis Societati S. Vincentii a Paulo unitorum, immo Rectorum cooperatoribus s i v e activis, sive honorariis, nec non pueris, tironibus, operariis omnibus varias artes exercentibus, qui in album dictorum Patrociniorum erunt inscripti, ad incrementum pietatis nec non zeli in promovendis præfatis piis operibus, indulgentiæ concedantur uti infra :

I. *A Plenary Indulgence* to the Directors of the Patronages, to their co-operators both active and honorary, to the children, apprentices and working men of all kinds received into the work of the Patronages on the following days:

1*st*, the day on which they so give their name to the aforesaid good work, or are received under its protection;

2*nd*, the Feast Day, regularly appointed in each diocese by the Ordinary, of the patron saint of the pious work;

3*rd*, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin;

4*th*, on the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary;

5*th*, on the feast of St. Vincent de Paul; provided that on the said days, being truly contrite, and having gone to Confes-

I. *Indulgentia plenaria.* Rectoribus pii operis Patrociniorum eorumque cooperatoribus sive activis, sive honorariis, pueris, tironibus operariisque universis sub opere Patrociniorum receptis, diebus sequentibus:

1° Die, quo ipsi præfato pio operi nomen dederint, vel in ejusdem pii operis tutelam recipientur.

2° Die festo titulari pii operis in qualibet diocesi ab Ordinario rite adsignato.

3° Die festo Immaculatæ Conceptionis Beatæ Mariæ Virginis.

4° Die festo Patrocinii S. Josephi, sponsi ejusdem Beatæ Mariæ Virginis.

5° Die festo S. Vincentii a Paulo, dummodo dictis diebus vere pœnitentes, confessi ac Sacra Communione refecti ali-

sion and Communion, they visit a church or public oratory, and there offer fervent prayers to Almighty God for the intentions of your Holiness;

6*th*, at the hour of death to all those above mentioned, to their relations to the first degree, and to the benefactors of the pious works of the Patronages, if, being in the dispositions already indicated, or at least being truly contrite, they devoutly invoke the most Holy Name of Jesus with their lips, or at least with their hearts;

7*th*, to the Directors and to their fellow-labourers four times in the year, on days to be appointed, once for all, by the Ordinary, if on the said days, being in the necessary dispositions they comply with the aforesaid conditions, and that also in the course of the year they shall have attended the meetings of Council three times each month.

quam ecclesiam, vel publicum eratorium, devote visitaverint ibique ad Deum præces iffudevint pies ad mentem Sanctitatis Vestræ.

6° In mortis articulo omnibus de quibus supra, nec non eorum consanguineis usque ad primum gradum itemque benefactoribus pii operis Patrociniorum, si uti supra dispositi, vel saltem contriti sanctissimum Jesu nomen ore, sin minus corde, devote invocaverint.

7° Rectoribus eorumque cooperatoribus quater in anno diebus ab Ordinario semel tantum designandis, si dictis diebus de more dispositi præfata peregerint simulque per anni cursum tribus vicibus quolibet mense cœtibus consilii interfuerint.

II. *An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines:* ... .

1*st*, to all those mentioned in the petition, every time they assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass said for the associates, that is, the Directors and their co-operators, for the children, apprentices and all working men received into the pious work of the Patronages;

2*nd*, every time they accompany the mortal remains of the associates for interment and recite some prayer;

3*rd*, to the Directors, and to their co-operators as well as to all the children, apprentices, working men of various crafts, received in the Patronages every time they shall attend the usual meetings held during the month, and offer a prayer at the beginning and at the close of the meeting.

II. *Indulgentia septem annorum totidemque quadragenarum* 1° Omnibus, de quibus in precibus singulis vicibus quibus interfuerint sacrosancto missæ sacrificio in suffragium Sodalium, id est Rectorum eorumque cooperatorum, puerorum, tironum, seu operariorum omnium sub pio opere Patrociniorum receptorum celebrando; itemque.

2° Singulis vicibus quibus sociorum cadavera ad sepulturam, aliquam precem recitantes, comitati fuerint.

3. Rectoribus dicti operis et ipsorum cooperatoribus nec non pueris, tironibus, operariis, omnibus varias artes exercentibus in Patrocinium receptis, singulis vicibus, quibus cœtibus in mense habere solitis interfuerint, aliqua eorumdem initio, et fine adhibita prece.

Quas omnes et singulas

Your petitioners implore your Holiness to deign to declare all and each of these Indulgences applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

Finally, they pray your Holiness that the Patronages founded or to be founded, with the consent of the Ordinaries in the several dioceses, and united to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul by a decree of the Council-General, may thereby enjoy the Indulgences solicited of your Holiness.

And that God...

Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, in the audience held of the 15th March, 1890, granted through the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Relics, all the favours sought. These presents will be available *for ever* without any issue of a Brief, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

indulgentias oratores Sanctitatem Vestram exorant, ut benigne velit declarare applicabiles animabus igne purgatorii detentis.

Demum preces admovent ad Sanctitatem Vestram, ut pia opera Patrociniorum in singulis diœcesibus de consensu Ordinariorum erecta vel erigenda et ex decreto Consilii generalis Societati S. Vincentii a Paulo unita eo ipso gaudere valeant indulgentiis a Sanctitate Vestra superius expostulatis.

Et Deus . . . . .

Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Papa Leo XIII, in audientia habita die 15 Martii, 1890, ab infrascripto Secretario S. Congregationis Indulgentiis Sacrisque Reliquiis præpositæ benigne annuit pro gratia in omnibus juxta preces. Præsenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque ulla Brevis expeditione, Contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

Given at Rome, from the Office of the Secretary of the said Congregation, on the 15th March, 1890.

C. Card. CRISTOFORI,
Prefect,

† ALEXANDER,
Archbishop of Nicopolis, Secretary.

Seen and approved, Paris, 18th June 1890.

CARON,
Vicar-General.

Datum Romæ ex Secretaria ejusdem S. Congregationis die 15 Martii, 1890.

C. Card. CRISTOFORI.
Præfectus.

† ALEXANDER,
Arrchiepiscopus Nicopolitan, Secret.

Visum et recognitum Parisiis, die 18 Junii, 1890.

CARON,
Vic. Generalis.

RESCRIPT OF OUR HOLY FATHER POPE LEO XIII

GRANTING AN INDULGENCE FOR EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETINGS

In the audience of His Holiness on the 21st. May. 1892, given to the Secretary mentioned here below of the Sacred Congrega-

Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Leo Papa XIII, in audientia habita die 21 Maii, 1892, ab infrascripto Secretario S.

tion of Indulgences and of the Holy Relics, Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII deigned to grant to all those indicated in the Petition an Indulgence of only seven years and seven quarantines to be gained once, on the day they shall attend the General Meetings, either annual or extraordinary, of one or of several dioceses together (which meetings are generally held in addition to those which have already taken place four times a year on the feast days indicated, or on one of the days in the octave of those same feasts, and on which they shall also pray for the intention of His Holiness.

These presents to be available for all time to come without any further Brief, anything whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Congregationis Indulgentiis Sacrisque Reliquiis præpositæ omnibus, de quibus in precibus, benigne tantum concessit Indulgentiam septem annorum totidemque quadragenarum semel lucrandum die quo ipsi adstiterint Cœtibus generalibus sive annuis sivi extraoinariis unius vel etiam plurium simul Diæcesium, quique, præter illos haberi solent, qui jam quater in anno celebrantur statis diebus festis aut uno die infra eorumdem festorum octiduum, simulque aliquam precem juxta mentem Sanctitatis suæ effuderint.

Praesenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque alla Brevis expeditione contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

Given at Rome, at the Secretary's Office of the same Sacred Congregation, 21st May, 1892.

Datum Romæ ex Secretaria ejusdem S.Congregationis die 21 Maii, 1892.

Card. SERAFINI,
Prefect.

Card. SERAFINI,
Præfectus.

† ALEXANDER,
Archbishop of Nicopolis,

† ALEXANDER,
Archiep. Nicopolitan Secret.

Seen and approved, Paris, 27th August, 1892.

Imprimatur Parisiis, die 27 Augusti, 1892.

H. CARON,
Vicar-General.

H. CARON,
Vicar-Generalis.

SUPPLICATION OF THE COUNCIL-GENERAL

DECISION OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF INDULGENCES

Extending during the Octave, the power of gaining the Indulgences granted to the works of patronage for the feasts of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, and of St. Vincent de Paul.

Most Holy Father,

Humbly prostate at the feet of your Holiness, the President-General and

Beatissimæ Pater,

Præses generalis et consultores generales Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo

the Members of the Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, of which the meeting-place is in Paris, set forth that by the Rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, bearing date the 15th March, 1890, a Plenary Indulgence was granted to the Directors of the pious work of the Patronages which this same Society seeks to develop, to their co-operators, either active or honorary, to all the apprentices and workmen admitted into the Work of the Patronages, to be gained on certain days of the year and notably on two Feasts, namely, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, and of St. Vincent de Paul. But in France, when these Feasts fall on a week-day, it is almost impossible for workmen especially, and for the other faithful admitted into the pious work of the Patronages, to go to

Parisiis existentis ad pedes Sanctitatis Vestræ provoluti exponunt per Rescriptum S. Congregationis Indulgentiarum sub die 15 Martii 1890, concessam fuisse Plenariam Indulgentiam Rectoribus Pii Operis Patrociniorum quod eadem Societas promovet, eorumque co-operatoribus sive activis sive honorariis, pueris, tironibus operariisque universis sub opere Patrociniorum receptis nonnullis infra annum diebus et præsertim duobus festis nempe Immaculatæ Conceptionis Beatæ Mariæ Virginis et S. Vincentii a Paulo. In Galliis vero, quum hujusmodi dies festi incident in dies profestos, impossibile fere est, ut operarii præsertim et alii Christi fideles qui sub memorato pio opere Patrociniorum recipiuntur adire valeant Ecclesiam peracturi sacramentalem Confessionem et recepturi sacrum Synaxim ad effectum lucrandi In-

Church in order to confess and receive Holy Communion, with the intention of gaining the Indulgence. Therefore it is, the petitioners humbly implore your Holiness, that the Plenary Indulgences granted for the aforesaid Feasts may be gained by all those to whom it is granted, either on the same Feasts, or on one of the seven days immediately following them, according to the choice of each person, by fulfilling the other conditions prescribed for gaining a Plenary Indulgence.

Which favour,

By virtue of the privileges specially conferred by our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics has been pleased to accede to the request. These presents to be available for all time without any further Brief, anything

dulgentias. Hinc oratores admovent preces Sanctitati Vestræ ut Indulgentia plenaria præfatis festivitatibus adnexa acquiri possit ab omnibus quibus est concessa vel in dictis festivitatibus vel in uno ex septem diebus eas immediate sequentibus uniuscujusque arbitrio eligendo, ceteris servatis conditionibus ad acquirendam plenariam Indulgentiam prræscriptis.

Quam gratiam...

Vignore specialium facultatum a Sanctissimo Domino nostro Leone Papa XIII, tributarum, S. Congregatio Indulgentiis Sacrisque Reliquiis præposita benigne annuit pro gratia juxta preces. Præsenti *In Perpetuum* valituro absque ulla Brevis expeditione, contrariis qui-

whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, at the Secretary's office of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics, 11th May, 1892.

Card. SERAFINI,
Prefect.

† ALEXANDER,
Archbishop of Nicopolis, Secretary.

buscumque non obstantibus.

Datum Romæ ex Secretaria ejusdem S. Congregationis die 11 Maii, 1892.

Card. SERAFINI,
Præfectus.

† ALEXANDER,
Archiep. Nicopolitan,

Seen and approved, Paris, 27th August, 1892.

H. CARON,
Vicar-General

Imprimatur Parisiis, die 27 Augusti, 1892.

H. CARON,
Vic. Generalis.

SUPPLICATION OF THE COUNCIL-GENERAL AND RESCRIPT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS X

Most Holy Father,

Humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, the President-General and the members of the Council-General of the Society St. Vincent de Paul, whose seat is in Paris, ask from Your Holiness: 1st. That the

provincial meetings, annual or extraordinary, should enjoy, in the future, the Plenary Indulgence, on condition that those present should receive Holy Communion in common at the stipulated Mass, and pray for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff. 2. That the Plenary Indulgence granted by a Brief dated 13th September, 1859, to the faithful to whom the Society affords succour and assistance, provided that, having confessed and received Holy Communion, they should visit a church or a public oratory and pray there for the ordinary intentions, the day of the Feast of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary (19th March), may be gained, under the same conditions, on the day of the Solemmnity of St. Joseph (3rd. Sunday after Easter), or on one of the seven days which follow the one Feast or the other.

And that God., etc.

Die 17 Julii, 1913.

Sanctissimus Dominus Noster D. Pius Divina Providentia Papa X, in Audientia R. P. D. Adsessori S. officii impertita, benigne annuit pro gratia in omnibus juxta preces. Præsenti in perpetuum valituro, absque ulla Brevis expeditione. Contrariis quibuscumqué non obstantibus.

† M. Card. RAMPOLLA,
D. Archiep. Seleuc. Ads. S. O.

It will be seen by reading the foregoing Briefs and Rescripts that the Sovereign Pontiffs have graciously conferred on the Council-General the power of making the Conferences participators in the Indulgences conceded, by aggregating these Conferences to the Society.

The Council-General being thus commissioned, it is necessary for the good working of the Society and the maintenance of its spirit, that Conferences which desire, for particular reasons to obtain any modifications in the conditions of the Briefs and Rescripts, should address themselves to this Council for the transmission of their request. Thus will be avoided the soliciting of favours already possessed by the Society, as sometimes happens through inadvertence. Moreover, our interests being represented before the Sacred Congregation by the Cardinal Protector of the Society, it is to be desired that such petitions be addressed to him by the Council-General, as His Eminence wishes.

INSTRUCTIONS
CONCERNING INDULGENCES

I

ON INDULGENCES IN GENERAL

Faith teaches us that after having obtained, in the Sacrament of Penance, the remission of our sins committed after Baptism — in so far, at least, as regards eternal punishment — in most cases there still remains due to divine justice a temporal reparation called satisfaction. The necessity of this satisfaction after forgiveness of sin is acknowledged and admitted by all Catholic divines, and the works by which we offer it to God are prayer, almsgiving, fasting and also submission to the Divine Will in all the troubles and afflictions of life. Nevertheless, as these works of atonement may for divers reasons be, and often are, insufficient, the Church, infallible in the knowledge and exercise of her spiritual powers, comes to the assistance of her children. Making use of the authority derived from her Divine Founder, she remits wholly or in part, but on certain condi-

tions carefully determined by herself, the temporal punishment that yet remained to be expiated in this world or the next.

The remission of this temporal punishment due to sins already relieved from the penalty of eternal damnation, and which the Church grants independently of the Sacrament of Penance, is called an *indulgence*.

Indulgences do not absolve anyone from the necessity of confessing his sins, receiving absolution and doing penance; on the contrary, they imply that all these things have already been done, and only make up for the deficiency of any atonement we ourselves con offer, by applying to us the superabundant satisfactions of Jesus-Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.

These infinite satisfactions offered by the Son of God and the Blessed Virgin, as also by divers Saints who during their lifetime have more than atoned for their own sins, form, according to Pope Clement VI, *a real treasure*, which increases every day by the accumulation of new spiritual riches, and of which the Church has been divinely instituted the Supreme and Exclusive dispenser. It is from this treasure the Church draws the Indulgences she daily applies to the Faithful, and which are destined to complete or replace, the satisfaction still due from them to Divine Justice.

Indulgences granted by the Church are either *Plenary* or *Partial*. They are *plenary* when they remit the whole of the punishment due to sin, provided always the blot or guilt of

sin has been effaced by the Sacrament of Penance; *Partial* when they only remit a part of the temporal punishment due to sin, as for instance, an Indulgence of seven years or seven periods of forty days.

By thus granting Indulgences which include a fixed number of days, weeks or years, the Church does not pretend to abridge numerically by so much the pains of Purgatory; her meaning is to remit thereby a portion of temporal punishment equal to that which would have been remitted by the same number of days, weeks, or years of Canonical Penance, as formerly enjoined by the *penitential canons*.

Indulgences, Plenary and Partial, may be applied to souls in Purgatory, but only when the Briefs granting them allow and authorise this. Still, the Church does not and cannot apply them directly to the dead, over whom she no longer possesses any jurisdiction; she grants them to the Faithful still living. These latter fulfil the works imposed, and present the atoning value of the Indulgence to God, by way of *suffrage* for the dead; praying Him to accept it in total or partial remission of the temporal punishment that may yet remain for their expiation.

That these Indulgences are acceptable to God and beneficial to souls in Purgatory is affirmed by all Catholic Divines. But how far, and in what degree God applies them to the souls we wish to relieve, is a question which we cannot determine. This application depends for its extent upon the Sovereign Will of God,

who has not, as in the Indulgences for the living, to ratify, in this case, the sentence of His Church

II

CONDITIONS REQUISITE FOR GAINING INDULGENCES

The conditions prescribed for gaining Indulgences relate both to the dispositions of the Faithful and to the works required.

On the part of the Faithful two dispositions are necessary; to be in a *state of Grace*, and to have the *intention* of gaining the Indulgence.

I. That he who is, and perseveres in a state of mortal sin, cannot gain Indulgences, admits of no doubt. Liable to eternal punishment while he remains in that state, he can by no means pretend to remission of the temporal pain due to sins that have neither been confessed or absolved. The inclination to venial sin does not prevent gaining Indulgences, which in this case, may be applied to other sins already remitted. Still, these Indulgences cannot be Plenary, because the temporal punishment due to sin, even venial, cannot be remitted, if the sin itself has not already been remitted; and this remission cannot take place while we still incline towards the perpetration of sin.

II. The intention requisite for gaining an Indulgence may be taken only in the morning, and applied to all good works to be performed in the day, and to which the Indulgences are attached.

III. As regards the works to be performed, and the manner of performing them, it is necessary to hold exactly to the terms of the Briefs or Rescripts which grant the Indulgences.

III

ON THE INDULGENCES GRANTED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, TO ITS BENEFACTORS, TO ITS POOR, AND TO THE FATHERS, MOTHERS, AND WIVES OF ITS MEMBERS.

Indulgences granted to members of the Society.

I. A Plenary Indulgence may be gained once a month by members of the Council-General and by members of Superior and Central Councils, and of the Particular Councils of Paris and of other cities, provided that, being truly contrite and having gone to Confession and received Holy Communion, they shall attend all the meetings of their Council or at least three of the four monthly meetings.

II. A like Indulgence is granted to all active members (not excepting the above-mentioned members of Councils who may have gained the Indulgence mentioned in the preceding paragraph), provided that, being truly contrite and having gone to Confession and received Holy Communion, they shall assist at all the general meetings, or the meetings of their Conference, or at least three out of four of the monthly meetings.

III. A Plenary Indulgence is granted to all, who being truly contrite and having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, shall be admitted to the various active grades of aspirant member, ordinary member, member of a Particular (1) Council, on the days upon which they are admitted to each of these grades.

IV. All the members, active or honorary, may gain a Plenary Indulgence on the day of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, on the first Sunday of Lent (2), on the Second Sunday after Easter, and on the day of the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, either on the said days or on one of the seven days immediately following them, the power being in force besides, according to the terms of the Brief of the 18th. March, 1853, of gaining the Plenary Indulgence granted for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also on the day to which the celebration of the feast is transferred; provided that, having confessed their sins, they receive Holy Communion at the Mass heard by them *in common*, either in the same Church or Chapel, or in several Churches or Chapels appointed for that intention by the Particular Council of each town, and that they attend the General Meeting which

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(1) That is to say *any* Council other than the Council General. (See Pag.e 162 note).

(2) By the Brief of the 13th September, 1859, the Indulgence of the First Monday of Lent is transferred to the First Sunday of Lent.

takes place at the same time and which may be held either on the eve of the feast from the hour of Vespers, or on the feast itself, or on one of the seven days immediately following it, without its being necessary that the General Meeting should take place on the same day as that on which the Mass is celebrated (1).

A Plenary Indulgence may also be gained by all members, active or honorary, who are present at a Provincial meeting, of one diocese or of several joined together, on condition that they receive Holy Communion at the Mass heard *in common*, and that they pray for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff (2).

The members of the Society can also gain an Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines on the day on which they are present at General meetings, either annual or extraordinary, of one or more dioceses united, and habitually held in addition to the regular meetings of the four Feasts of the Society, on the condition that they should recite a prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father (3).

V. Members who, being afflicted by serious illness or suffering from infirmities, are prevented from hearing the Mass in common, or

(1) Rescript of the 30th January, 1888 and letter of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences dated 15th July, 1888.

(2) Rescript of 17th July, 1913.

(3) Rescript of 21st May, 1892.

attending the General Meeting, may gain the Indulgences granted to Members by performing some other pious work which shall be assigned to each by his Confessor, and which, having regard to their strength, they may substitute for the conditions which they were bound to fulfil in order to gain the Indulgence.

VI. A Plenary Indulgence is granted at the point of death to the members of the Society who, being truly penitent, and having confessed ther sins, or of this be not possible, being at least truly contrite, shall devoutly call upon the name of Jesus with their lips, if able, and if not able any rate with their heart, and shall with patience and courage accept death from God's hand, as the punishmen of sin.

VII. A Plenary Indulgence is granted on the 8th March, the Feast of Saint John of God, to the members who visit the sick either in the hospitals or in their own homes (1).

VIII. An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines is granted to all the active members each time that with at least contrite arts they assist at a Conference meeting, visit a poor family, or the schools or work-shops of the poor, or perform any other good work in accordance with the spirit of the Society.

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(1) Rescript of the 13th January, 1877, obtained upon the application of the Superior General of the Brothers of Saint John of God (See Bulletin for May, 1877, Paris, and same number of the Bulletin published at Dublin p. 133).

They can also gain this Indulgence each time that they assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass whenever it is celebrated for the repose of the soul of any associate, or accompany the remains of the poor to Christian burial.

All these Indulgences may be gained by Associates living in places where no Conference has as yet been established, provided they perform the usual works of charity and fulfil the other prescribed conditions.

IX. When the Conferences hold Retreats, a Plenary Indulgence is granted to all members who assist devoutly at all the exercises, provided that, being truly penitent and having confessed their sins, they receive Holy Communion at the Mass on the last day of the Retreat and pray for the concord of Christian princes, the extirpation of heresies, and the exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church. An Indulgence of 100 days is granted to those who, being truly contrite, follow a part of the Exercises and pray as above.

X. An Indulgence of 300 days is granted to all the members of the Society each time that, with a contrite heart, they recite,, in any language, the prayer of the Society : « We thank Thee, O Lord... ».

These Indulgences are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

Indulgences granted to the benefactors of the Society.

I. A Plenary Indulgence and remission of their sins may be gained once a month by each and every one of the faithful of either sex who regularly gives a fixed and determined alms to the Council-General, on condition of contrition, confession and Holy Communion.

II. An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines may be gained once a month by all the faithful of either sex, who in like manner send a fixed alms to the Particular Councils established by the Council-General in any province or town.

III. An Indulgence of one year may be gained, once a month, by all the faithful of either sex, who, by subscription or any other way, undertake to give regularly a fixed alms to the Conferences aggregated by the Council-General.

IV. An indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines may be gained once a month by all the faithful of either sex, on the days upon which they shall have made a collection for the Council-General, or for any Particular Council.

V. An Indulgence of 300 days is granted to the benefactors of the Society every time that, with a contrite heart, they recite in any language the prayer of the Society : « We give Thee thanks, O Lord ». This Indulgence may be applied to the souls in Purgatory.

VI. A Plenary Indulgence is granted to the

benefactors of the Society at the point of death, provided that, being truly penitent and having confessed, or if they cannot do this, being at least contrite, they invoke devoutly the name of Jesus with their lips, if it be possible, or at any rate in their hearts, and with patience and courage accept death from the hand of God, as the punishment of sin.

Indulgences granted to the poor under the care of the Society.

I. The Brief of the 13th September, 1859, modified by the Rescript of 17th July, 1913, grants to all the poor of either sex, to whom the Society of St. Vincent de Paul gives assistance, a Plenary Indulgence on Christmas Day, on the Feast of St. Joseph (19th March), the day of the Solemnity of St. Joseph (3rd Sunday after Easter), or on either of the seven days which precede or follow one or the other of the two last Feasts, and on the last day of the annual Retreat, provided that, being truly contrite and having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, they devoutly visit any Church or public Oratory and pray therein for concord among Christian princes, for the extirpation of heresies and the exaltation of our Mother the Church. As to the three festivals, the visit to the Church may be made at any time between first Vespers and the end of the festival, and on the last day of the Retreat the visit must be made between sunrise and sunset.

II. A Plenary Indulgence is granted on the 8th March, the Feast of St. John of God, to the sick assisted by the Conferences in the hospitals (1).

III. The Brief of the 13th September, 1859, grants an Indulgence of 100 days to all whom the Society relieves, provided that, with a contrite heart, they recite alone, or with their family, the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary, adding*, in any language, the following invocation : *Queen conceived without sin, pray for us ; St. Vincent de Paul, pray for us.*

(These Indulgences are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.)

Indulgences granted to the fathers, mothers and wives of members of the Society (*Brief of the 5th. September*, 1873, *and Rescript of the 30th January*, 1888).

I. A Plenary Indulgence is granted at the hour of death to all and every one of the fathers and mothers and wives of members of the Society who, being truly penitent, having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, or, if unable to do so, at least with true contrition, invoke, with the lips if they can do so, and at least with their heart, if unable to do more the Holy Name of Jesus.

II. A Plenary Indulgence and remission of all their sins to the same, provided they attend every day at the Society's Retreat,and on the

(1) Rescript of 13th January, 1877. (See p. 187).

concluding day, being truly penitent and having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and pray devoutly for concord among Christian princes, the extirpation of heresies, and the exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church.

III. An Indulgence of 100 days to the same, provided that on any day they assist with devotion at the before-mentioned spiritual exercises.

IV. An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines is also granted to the same persons, as often as they assist at any religious office celebrated for the soul of any deceased member of the Society, or accompany the mortal remains of the poor to Christian burial, or do any other pious or charitable work in accordance with the practice of the Society.

All these Indulgences are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

Indulgences granted to the managing committees of the Patronages united (1) *to our Society and to the other members of those works* (*Rescript of 15th March, 1890 and Decision of 11th May, 1892*).

I

The directors of the Patronages and their co-operators, whether active or honorary, the

(1) Applications for the union of patronages to the Society, as well as for the aggregation of Conferences, are to be sent to the Council-General and granted by it.

children, apprentices and workmen, may gain, on the usual conditions, a Plenary Indulgence.

1. — On the day of their admission into the works, as soon as the work has been united to the Society by the Council-General;

2. — On the day of the Patronal Feasts of the work, regularly fixed by the Ordinary;

3. — On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin; or one of the seven following days;

4. — On the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph (3rd Sunday after Easter);

5. — On the feast of St. Vincent de Paul; or one of the seven following days;

6. — At the hour of death, the Plenary Indulgence is applicable, in that case, not only to the members of the work, but also to their parents and to the benefactors of that same work;

7. — Finally. the same Indulgence may be gained by the directors of the Patronages and their co-operators four times in the year, on the days fixed by the said ordinary, once for all, if, having on the aforesaid days fulfilled the usually required conditions, they have attended, in the course of the year, three times a month the meetings of the Committee of the work.

II

An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines is besides granted to the associates;

1. — Every time that they shall assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass celebrated for one of them;

2. — Every time that they shall accompany the mortal remains of their associates to the grave, by reciting a fews prayers ;

3. — Every time also that they shall attend the meetings which it is customary to hold during the month, by adding some prayer at the beginning and the end.

Finally, all these Indulgences, and each one in particular, are declared applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

Seen and certified,

Paris, 25th October, 1913.

PAGES, *Vicar-General.*

OTHER FAVOURS OF THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFFS
GRANTED TO OUR SOCIETY

Having recounted the numerous spiritual favours by which the Church seems to have shown a desire to consecrate the existence and organisation of our Society. it is fitting to recall some of the facts and circumstances by which the Sovereign Pontiffs have also exhibited the constant sentiments of paternal interest towards our Society by which they have been animated.

In the first place we will cite the designation by His Holiness Pius IX on the 1st. August, 1851, of a Cardinal Protector of our Society, who has become a permanent support and vigilant guardian of the Society's interests and the Holy See. Monsignor Fornari, previously Nuncio at Paris, was the first who filled the office.

We will cite, in the second place, the general assembly held at Rome on the 5th January, 1855, in connection with the festivities that accompanied the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and at which Pius IX of sainted and glorious memory, addressed to 450 members of our Society assembled there, the following admirable words :

« Assuredly this is not the least of the con-
« solation which Our Heart has experienced

« during the days which are passing; this is « not the least, I say, to find myself in the « midst of you, dearly beloved sons, who, fortified and enriched by Divine grace, that « grace which Christ purchased for us, and « under protection of St. Vincent de Paul who « preached and practised with wonderful ardour the works of charity have undertaken to put in practice that commandment « which the same Saviour called a new commandment : *Mandatum novum do vobis.* « And this new commandment he expressed « thus : « Love one another and love your « brethren, not for the personal qualities or « gifts of nature which God has poured upon « some among them, but love them simply « because each of your brethren, were he the « last among the last of men, is always My « Image. »

« In dedicating yourselves to the practice of « this commandment, you place yourselves on « a ground whither the world itself fears not « to come, to admire the good of which God « made you the instruments. A strange « thing in truth, and yet incontestable. The « world, while it depreciates every other virtue, « is prodigal of praise for the works of charity. Humility, chastity, are in its eyes only « meanness, resistance to natural laws, blind « fanaticism. Only in the admiration of the « effects of charity does the world unite with « you. Protestants, unbelievers, bad Catholics, here confound their own feelings with

« those of the truly righteous, and exalt to the « skies the charitable works that are accom- « plished in your midst.

« May God then be blessed for having « opened to you the way for the exercise, not « merely of the works that relieve the body, « but also of those that relate to the sancti- « fication of the soul.

« And as these works, in order to be pro- « ductive of great fruit, must be well regu- « lated, it is with a lively satisfaction that I « found in the Report just read, the constant « intention of keeping yourselves in perfect « accord with, and attending to the counsels « of those who, ordained by God to be the sen- « tinels of His people, watch night and day « for their sanctification. I bless you also « because I see that it is your further aim to « put in practice that other counsel of the « Saviour — *He who is the first among you « let him make himself the servant of the « others*, and, as He said of Himself — *I am « not come into the world to be served but to « serve.*

« May God then bless your good inten- « tions, your goodwill; may He, for all days « to come, encourage you to do good.

« I bless you in the name of Jesus-Christ, « who has loved us so much, that He shed the « last drop of His Precious Blood, in order « to wipe away from our souls the mark of « our eternal condemnation.

« I bless you in the name of the Holy « Ghost, and I pray the Father of the poor, « the Dispenser of Heavenly gifts, the Con- « soler of the afflicted, that He may vouch- « safe to shed upon you a ray of His heavenly « light, yo that illumined and sanctifiel be that « light, you may be able to lead back to the « right way those souls on whom you lavish « your benefits, and who have strayed from « the path of virtue.

« I bless you in the name of the Holy Tri- « nity, and may this blessing accompany you « all the days of your life. May it extend « to all those who co-operate in your works of « charity, whether at Rome, in Italy, in Eu- « rope, or through the entire universe.

« I bless you for the period of your mortal « course, and for the last hour of your life, so « that after it you may be blessed of God in « Heaven for all eternity.

« *Benedictio dei omnipotentis, Patris, et « Filii, et Spiritus sancti, descendat super vos « et maneat semper.* »

We will recall also how in 1883, when our Work celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation, the august successor of Pius IX, Leo XIII, not content with granting to all its members and all its poor a Plenary Indulgence to be gained on that occasion, vouchsafed in addition, by a delicate and most touching attention, to associate with our Jubilee, the new honour which he decreed to St. Vincent de

Paul, by selecting that date to declare him Patron of all the works and associations of charity which sprang from him.

We must not fail to record here also the favourable judgment passed the following year upon our Society by the Holy Father in his Encyclical *Humanum genus*. Here are the terms in which His Holiness expressed himself :

« We cannot pass over in silence a Society « that has given so many admirable examples « and deserved so well of the people. We refer « to that which has taken the name of its « Father, St. Vincent de Paul. The works « achieved by the Society and the object which « it has proposed to itself, are well known. « The efforts of its members tend simply, by a « charitable initiative, to lead them to the help « of the poor and unfortunate; an end attained « with wonderful wisdom and a not less admi- « rable modesty. But the more this Society « conceals the good that it does, the better « fitted it is for the practice of Christian cha- « rity and the relief of the miseries of men. »

On the occasion of his sacerdotal Jubilee, Leo XIII renewed those marks of particular benevolence towards our Society by receiving on the 4th February, 1888, in a solemn audience and in several succeeding audiences, nearly fifteen hundred of our brothers who had come on pilgrimage to Rome from the most widely separated countries, and recalling to them, in a magnificent discourse, the supreme object of their charitable mission in the world.

« We know how prosperous your Conferences are everywhere, and in this prosperity « We are happy to see a providential fact. « In Our days, more perhaps than at any other « time, society, which is ailing, feels the need « of being relieved by Works of Charity. « Charity is the proper and distinguishing characteristic of the true disciples of Jesus-« Christ. And, accordingly, our enemies, « whose grand aim nowadays is the dechristianising of the nations, use every expedient to « weaken in the mind the idea and the conception of this virtue, and seek, with an insidious « refinement, to substitute a false and lying « charity for true Christian charity.

« To an attempt so audacious and so « deadly, it is indispensable, very dear sons, « that you should oppose an energetic resistance by giving to your charitable works an « ever-widening extension, by exerting a holy « industry to render their action more penetrating and more persuasive, by spreading the « salutary influence of charity to men of all « classes, and by applying it as the most efficacious remedy to all the evils, all the needs « of society. And all that you must do with « an unbounded trust in the Divine strength of « that virtue, which knows how to triumph « over the most obstinate resistance and to « subdue the most rebellious wills. ».....

On the 18th April, 1893, ,the occasion of the episcopal jubilee of Leo XIII, upwards of seven hundred members of the Society who had

come on pilgrimage to Rome, were happy to find in the Sovereign Pontiff the same sentiments of benevolent solicitude for our Work and to hear fall from his mouth these paternal recommendations :

« Be always united among yourselves, no « matter what nation you belong to, for Chris- « tian charity knows no frontiers. Encourage « one another in the practice of devotion to « the poor and needy, and tell one another of « your success and the pious labours of your « zeal. Let each of you be more and more « penetrated with the spirit of the heroic Saint « whose name you bear, and strive to imitate « his grand examples. We pray God to give « you the grace to do so through the inter- ces- « sion of St. Vincent de Paul, preeminently « the Apostle of charity in modern times ; and « as a pledge of those heavenly favours We « grant you, with all the affection of Our « heart, to yourselves and to your families, to « the directors of your Conferences, to their « works, and to all your Associates, the Apos- « tolic Blessing. »

During the course of the year 1909, to commemorate the double Jubilee, sacerdotal and episcopal, of His Holiness, Pius X, the Council General decided to invite the brothers of the whole world to a pilgrimage to Rome which would coincide with the festivities connected with the Beatification of Joan of Arc.

From all the countries where our Society is established, from Australia to Chili, from Den-

mark to the South of Africa, the brothers to the number of about 1400 came to unite themselves at the feet of the Holy Father.

Imposing and beautiful ceremonies united them ; a general meeting was held at the Palace of the Chancery, under the presidency of His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Vanutelli, the Protector of the Society, and in the presence of six Cardinals and thirty Bishops, who wished thus to give our work the testimony of their sympathy.

On the 16th April, in the Hall of the Consistory, the Sovereign Pontiff admitted all the members of the Society to a solemn audience, and addressed to them the following words, which constitute the most precious encouragement to persevere in the way laid down by the founders of the Society :

« If anyone can say of all the Saints that, « after having accomplished their mortal ca- « reer, they still live in the memory of men by « the virtues of which they left an example, « and by the works which they founded, it is « just that we should solemnly attribute this « honour to St. Vincent de Paul. He lives « again in the Society of the venerable priests « of the Mission, in the incomparable Daugh- « ters of Charity, born, so to speak, between « his hands, without mentioning here so many « other institutions which owe to him their « origin, survives finally, in the admirable « institution of the Conferences, which a « century and a half after his death, placed

« itself under his patronage, took his name,
« and his apostolic spirit ; a new generaton, and
« and was juspired with his faith, his charity
« unexpected posterty, which has carried to
« al parts the fruits of blessing.

« We salute you, well-beloved sons of the
« Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul. We
« thank you for the consolation which you
« bring to Our heart, not only by the good
« wishes which you offer Us on the occasion
« of Our sacerdotal Jubilee, but more by the
« conquests of your zeal and the abundant
« harvest of your works of Charity. The
« grain of mustard seed, sown in 1833 by
« Frederick Ozanam, has become a gigantic
« tree, which spreads its branches over the
« whole world, and, after seventy-six years,
« the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul are
« already flourishing in France, in Italy, in
« Belgium, in Holland, in Switzerland, in En-
« gland, in North and South America, in Ca-
« nada, in Australia; they penetrate into Rus-
« sian Poland and into the Belgian Congo;
« they are becoming the centre round which
« group themselves the neophytes of all the
« missions of the earth.

« We rejoice with you, well-beloved sons,
« at this marvellous prosperity, and, in order
« that it may continue without ceasing, we
« exhort you to be in advance of all men in
« charity which operates by faith. In your
« works of beneficence, look always for your
« inspirations at the foot of the altar. If your

« hands are daily lifted to God in the homage « of prayer before they are lowered to alle- « viate human miseries, they will be strengthend « to bring to God those souls who have lost all « thought of Heaven. Your beneficence « should not be that of men, but of Christians, « who see in the poor a sacred thing and not « only the image but the person itself of Our Saviour Jesus Christ.

« When our Saviour Jesus Christ gave to « His apostles the mission to preach the « Gospel, he also confided to the seventy-two « disciples the care of curing the infirm, and « of announcing to the the coming reign of « God. The institution of the Conferences of « St. Vincent de Paul answers admirably to « this design of the Divine Redeemer for the « conversion of the world. The apostle clo- « thed with the priestly character, having for « his office to teach the truths of the faith and « to confirm them by prodigious works of cha- « rity, finds in the lay apostolate of the faith- « ful a powerful help which prepares the way, « and by the alleviation of corporal misery « throws open souls to evangelical truth.

« In fact, while the genius of evil inspires so « many unhappy people, not only with de- « fiance, but with hatred of the priest, thwarts « so many meetings with this messenger of « God, and, by efforts worthy of Satan, closes « to him all access to souls, the sons of St. Vin- « cent de Paul, animated with the spirit of « the apostles, even though they do not wear

« their habit, are received with welcome among « families where a priest, aided by these in- « comparable precursors, enters in his turn « without hindrance, and thus, the missions « which the sons of St. Vincent de Paul pre- « pare, produce in a parish, in a few days, as « much fruit as could have been obtained in « long years by its pastor, despite his indefati- « gable zeal. Children and adults baptized, « unlawful unions legitimised by holy mar- « riage, abjurations of heretics, conversions of « sinners, frequent use of the Sacraments of « Penance and Holy Eucharist, congregations « edified, Christian schools founded ; such are, « well-beloved sons, the triumphs of grace that « the Saviour is pleased to bring about by your « agency. »....

The Council-General having decided to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Frederick Ozanam, by festivities organised in Paris on the 25th to the 28th April, 1913, the Sovereign Pontiff deigned, not only to authorise our Cardinal Protector to preside at the solemnities, but conferred on him the signal honour of the title of Legate, almost without precedent in like circumstances, and addressed to him on this occasion the following letter, overflowing with good wishes for our works :

VENERABILI FRATRI NOSTRO VINCENTIO S. R. E. CARDINALI VANUTELLI, EPISCOPO PRAENESTINO.

PIUS X.

VENERABILIS FRATER, NOSTER SALUTEM ET APOSTOLICAM BENEDICTIONEM.

Quod propediem exeunte sæculo, ex quo Antonius Fredericus Ozanam hanc lucem aspexit, Societas Vincentiana, ut accepimus, solemni commemoratione celebrare virum parat, Nos equidem probamus vehementer tale propositum libentissimeque facturi, sumus utilla ipsa solemnia Nostræ dignitatis accessione amplificemus.

Etenim cum justum arbitramur ejus ornare nomen qui profecto in illustranda et scriptis et factis salutari vestule Catholicæ

TO OUR VENERABLE BROTHER VINCENT VANUTELLI, CARDINAL OF THE HOLY ROMAN CHURCH, BISHOP OF PALESTRINA,

PIUS X, POPE

VENERABILI FRATRI, NOSTRO SALUTEM ET APOSTOLICAM BENEDICTIONEM.

We have learned that very soon, a century having elapsed since Anthony Frederick Ozanam saw the light of day, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is preparing to celebrate by a solemn commemoration the memory of this eminent man. We greatly approve of such a project, and it is very wilingly that in order to render this festival the more solemn, We take part in it.

In fact, not only do we deem it just to honour the name of him who consumed his whole life (alas too short) in giving light

fidei ætatem omnem heu non ita longam, consumpsit ut interpræclaros Christianæ sapientiæ vindices ponantur : tum vero nollumus occasioni deesse, quæ datur, testandæ rursus propensissimœ voluntatis Nostræ erga illud opus quod *Conferentiarum* dicitur, cujus hic jure primarius conditor habetur.

by his writings and by his acts to the saving efficiency of the Catholic Faith, so that he has taken rank amongst the most noteworthy champions of Christian science; but We also are unwilling to let pass the opportunity which presents itself to attest once more our most favourable disposition with regard to the work called the *Conferences* of which this man is very rightly called the founder.

Nam consociatio id genus, quæ eum ad Christianam caritatem tota spectet, nomine patrocinioque r e c t e utitur Vincentii a Paulo, quis non miretur quam brevi tempore quam t a v e sum utilitate communi se esque quaque propogavit? Vixdum ejus hic noster cum paucis ejusdem animi virtutisque sodalibus semina jecerant, alte radices egit, atque opinione celerius tamquam in celsam arborem patulisque diffusam ramis excre-

How can we fail to admire how quickly and with what profit this Society, which claims so justly the name and patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul, has propagated itself in every place.

Hardly had our dear Ozanam, with a few companions animated with the same spirit and the same zeal, sown the seeds, than their roots struck deep, and grew more quickly than one could have thought possible, like a

vit; ut consentaneum ceteroqui erat ingenio nationis Gallicæ qua quidem ad Religionem promovendam nihil actuosius aut uberius. Eademque nunc late per terrarum orbem magno est usui non solum multitudini egenorum, quibus tum ad hanc vitam tum ad æternam bona adjumenta suppeditat, verum etiam sociis ipsis, quos commode per varia Christianæ miseriordiae munia ad omnem sanctimoniam exercet.

great tree stretching everywhere its bushy branches; a development in keeping with the genius of the French nation which none surpasses in activity and fruitfulness in enterprises capable of promoting religion.

At the present time this work of the Conferences, spread far and near on the surface of the universe, is splendidly useful, not only to the poor, whom it furnishes with efficacious help, for this life and for eternal life, but to the associates themselves, whom it trains in an excellent manner in sanctification by the divers offices of Christian charity.

Hæc reputantibus Nobis satis superque est causæ curi. Nos in primis ista partcipemus s o l l e m n i a, optemusque ut honoribus habendis meritissimo viro simul operis ejus notitia apud homines atque studium crecat. Ac sane in

T h e s e considerations are amply sufficient to make Us take part, among the first, in the solemnities now in preparation, to make Us wish that the honours rendered to so meritorious a p e r s o n s h o u l d develop the knowledge and love for his work amongst men.

tanta perturbatione rerum omnium, quantam vel doctrinarum fallacia vel cupiditatum licentia creat, optime civili societati consulatur, si, quotquot Christianiam ipsius disciplinam curæ habent, Ozanam et magistrum sequantur et ducem. Itaque majora semper a Deo Societati Vincentianæ incrementa precanda sunt, ut saluberrima sui auctoris instituta longe lateque usque in ultimas oras possit extendere.

Assuredly in so great an upheaval of everything, the fruit of false doctrines, or of the license of bad desires, it would be a resolution eminently serviceable to all the interests of society, if all those who have the wish to endow it with a Christian discipline, would take Ozanam for their master and chief. Thus we must ask of God an ever-increasing growth for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul so that it may propagate in every direction, to the most distant shores, the most salutary practices which it owes to its founder.

Jam vero, cum in generali cœtu, quem apud summum Consilium delecti *Conferentiarum* habituri sunt Parisiis, velimus esse qui hœc animi Nostri sensa exponat, nullum vimus aptiorem cui hoc mande demus officit. quam illum S.R.E. Cardinalem, qui vicesimum jam annum

Moreover, We wish that there may be some one to interpret these thoughts of Our heart in the assembly which the delegates of the *Conferences* are about to hold in Paris in conjunction with the Council-General. We see no one more fitted to receive such a mission

Societatis hujus apud Apostolicam Sedem patronum agit, participes studiorum ejus cœptorumque fautor perdiligens.

Quare te, venerabilis Frater Noster, Legatum Nostrum mittimus, qui, quæ his litteris tibi significamus in eo cœtu verbis Nostris exprimas. Idem generali Concilio ac ceteris, quos una conventuros diximus, universis etiam quos Societas Vincentiana vel habet sodales, vel juvat pauperes, atque omnibus de clero populoque claris viris quicumque ad hæc sollemnia honestanda contulenit aliqid apostolicam benedictionem, auspicem divinorum numerum efferes; quam tibi primum, Venerabilis Frater Noster, amantissime impertimus.

than the Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, who for twenty years has been the Protector of the said Society at the Apostolic See, participates in its works, and actively favours its enterprises.

Thus it is you, venerable Brother, whom we send as Our Legate to express to this assembly in Our name the sentiments which We manifest to you by this letter. You will also bear the Apostolic Benediction, pledge of heavenly favours, to the Council General, to the other members, who, as We have said, will be assembled together, to all those whom the Society of St. Vincent de Paul classifies as associates, or assists as poor, to all the distinguished men, either amongst the clergy or the Christian people, who shall have contributed to enhance the said solemnities. This Benediction We accord

very affectionately to you yourself, venerable Brother.

Datum Romæ apud S. Petrum ipso die sollemni Paschæ anno MCMXIII Pontificatus Nostri decimo.

Given at Rome, at Saint Peter's, the day of the Solemnnity of Easter, the year 1913, the tenth of Our Pontificate.

PIUS PP. X.

PIUS X. Pope.

The International General Meeting of the Conferences had been fixed for Saturday, 26th April. More than three thousand brothers took part, and despite the immense size of the hall where the reunion took place, it proved too small. It was certainly the most magnificent assembly which had ever united the members of the Society, magnificent from the number which crowded it, from the considerable number of strangers present, from the quality and eloquence of the orators, from the presence of a Pontifical Legate, several Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops, impressive also by the union of all hearts beating in unison, showing forth the same sentiments of steadfast faith, of ardent charity, of attachment to the Holy See, and to the Church. Cardinal Vanutelli recited the ordinary prayer of the Conferences ; all present kneeling and rising again to hear the letter of the Sovereign Pontiff read by the Secretary General, and greeted with prolonged applause.

Then the Cardinal, graciously inviting

all to be seated, takes up the work, and expressing himself in French with as much ease as in his national tongue, with a strong, well-pitched voice, pronounces the following discourse, frequently interrupted by applause :

YOUR EMINENCES,
MY LORDS,
GENTLEMEN,

« You have just heard the august words of « the Vicar of Christ. His Holiness has deigned to give us in his letter, so eloquent and « so full of benevolence, the reasons of my « coming and of my presence amongst you.

« It is in the name of this august Pontiff « that I come to you; it is on his behalf that I « salute here the deputies of this great people, « of this vast federation of the Conferences of « St. Vincent de Paul, assembled from all « countries of the world, in this capital which « was its cradle, even from regions the most « distant, in spite of fatigue, of distance, of « differences of language and nationality, and « of numberless other difficulties over which « supernatural charity can alone triumph by a « miracle, the secret of its power.

« It is in the name of the supreme Head of « the Church that I bring to this cosmopolitan « and world-wide reunion, the exceptional blessings which the Holy Father has reserved « for you, placing in them the kindness of his « great heart.

« But have not these blessings a special si- « gnificance? Are they not a manifestation

« of certain express wishes of His Holiness ?
« Does not the Pontifical Letter which you
« have just heard read bear eloquently the
« meaning ? Yes ; no one can be deceived.
« These benedictions proclaim abroad, first.
« that the Pope is particularly pleased with
« your resolution to commemorate solemnly
« Frederick Ozanam, on the occasion of the
« centenary of his birth, on the occasion spe-
« cially of the day on which it pleased God in
« the person of this infant regenerated by the
« baptismal water, to give to the Church, to
« France, to the world, to men of intellect
« without faith, and to poor without bread,
« the illustrious Christian who, on the still
« recent ruins of the great revolution, spread
« valiantly the standard of a reborn Christian
« civilization, with a science and a literature
« which a faith without human respect enligh-
« tened and fructified ; with a charity and with
« orks which the sacrifice realised by the love
« of Him who, on the Cross, taught us to give
« all and to give ourselves to our neighbour,
« inspired and multiplied.

« What a grand figure, gentlemen, that of
« this scribe and this orator who inspired with
« the desire to cause the providential and civi-
« lising action of the Catholic Church to shine
« on the people issuing from barbarism, traces
« for us with as much erudition as heart and
« eloquence, those admirable historical pic-
« tures, which truly recall the master ideas
« which inspired the genius of Augustine in the

« City of God » and of The Eagle of Meaux « in his « Discourse on Universal History. ». .

« To this universal culture of Ozanam, to « his prodigious talent which played lightly « over the labyrinths of history and the most « delicate mirages of poetry, add this heart of « gold, this charity, which lit around him fire, « which, by his works, was to embrace the « world; and tell me whether one often meets, « in the same man, so many masterly qualities « united with so many fruitful influences.....

« These blessings of the Holy Father have « yet another meaning. They manifest the « love which the Sovereign Pontiff has con- « ceived in his heart for the Society in which « Ozanam took such a great part and of which « he was the most ardent and illustrious apostle.

« How would it be possible that the common « Father of the faithful, who bears the burden « of all the churches, and in whose heart all « the groans all the miseries of the world, the « cries of all the poor, and the lamentations of « all distresses are reflected, should not love « his dear Society of St. Vincent de Paul, so « devoted and so docile to all his directions, « so penetrated with the true spirit of Jesus « Christ, so respectful every where and always « to the hierarchy, which has become the grand « almoner of Providence for this poor and « indigent humanity of which the Pope bears « in his son the agonising solicitude.

« Thanks to the Society of St. Vincent de « Paul, light and confidence enter again along

« with faith into all corners where subversive « sectarian ideas have sown darkness and des- « pair.

« Thanks to it, young Christians find again « in the exercise of devotion, the spirit of sa- « crifice the safeguard and preservation of their « chastity. Thanks to it we see making itself « felt the splendid movement of the religious re- « birth of youth, which gives us all joy as the « dawn of a new era, of which it has been the « secret preparation and the providential pre- « lude. Thanks to it and to all the branches « of this great tree, under which all miseries « take shelter, thanks to all the works of cha- « rity to which it has, like a fruitful mother, « given birth, the sick, the workers, the or- « phans and the children, are looked after. « cared for, nourished, helped in time and « saved for eternity.

« The Conferences of St.. Vincent de Paul « are truly the honour and glory of our times; « they figure in history as one of the most « prodigious institutions which laymen, banded « together, have been able to conceive and « realise. They do not express themselves « in a human way, they are truly the work « of God, the enduring union of the members « of your Society, dispersed to all parts of « the universe, the integrity of its spirit of « faith, the miracles of its charity, the pro- « fusion of its gifts, and the innumerable « good works of its apostolate, make it, as it « were, a resurrection, under another form, of

« the orders of chivalry of the ages of faith, « set in opposition by God with the peaceful « arms of charity and supernatural devotion, « like an all-powerful crusade of Catholic cha- « rity, against the deceptive efforts of altruism « and philanthropy, or of humanitarian bene- « ficence.

« But what more do these blessings of the « Holy Father signify? They signify before « all, and especially the paternal goodwill « with which His Holiness looks, full of hope « and to the incomparable zeal of Ozanam and « birth to this work, from which it has propa- « gated itself in the whole universe, thanks to « the initiative and generous and Christian « impulse from France, thanks to the efforts « and to the incomparable zeal of Ozanam and « to the other sons of this nation, which Pope « Gregory IX, in the time of Saint Louis « already named the « *Chosen Nation* ».

« Our Redeemer » said he « in choosing « the kingdom of France for the special exe- « cutor of His Divine Will, armed Himself as « with a quiver; he draws from it and that « often, chosen arrows, with the bow of His « allpowerful arm He sends them forth into the « world for the defence of the faith and the « liberty of the Church, for the reign of evil « and the triumph of liberty. » (1).

« Seven hundred years later Pius X speaks « in the same language. It is on France

(1) Fr. Labbe, Concil, t. XI, p. 366.

« which he wishes to rely, on that France for « which, as he says in his letter, no work of « Christian activity or of fruitfulness is too « much. Yes, when Pius X speaks of « France, he is all tenderness for her, in Ca- « tholic France, faithful to her origin and to « her Christian traditions, he sees the hope of « the Church seated weeping on the ruins of so « many secular works, and on the infidelity of « her own children.

« Ah. may France always refill the quiver « with chosen shafts, like Ozanam, like the « founders of the Conferences of St. Vincent « de Paul. May this admirable Society, « more faithful than ever to its glorious past, « be a bow supple and vigorous, placed at « the disposition of Holy Church and of its « august chief. May the arm of God make « use of it to send forth often to all parts of « the world, as he formerly sent his apostles, « some of his sacred arrows, to give the soft « wound of charity to hearts, hardened by « hate or by indifférence; that disciplined and « made docile by the hand of the Divine « Archer, who discharges them, they may fly « with an indomitable constancy, tracing a « streak of light to the end of their flight, for « the defence of the faith, and for the liberty « of the Church, for the ruin of iniquity, for « the triumph of justice... and of charity.

« I conclude, and in the name of Him « who sends me, I sum up the threefold greet-

« ing which I address to you, in these three « cries from my heart :

« Honour to Ozanam.

« Honour to the Society of St. Vincent de « Paul.

« Honour to France.

To our dear Son Louis Viscount d'Hendecourt, President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and other members of the Council General of the same Society at Paris.

BENEDICT XV. POPE (1).

Dear Sons,

Greeting and Apostolic Benediction.

Charity, far from becoming extinct, becomes stirred into a fresh flame, from day to day more bright, even by the progress

BENEDICTUS PP. XV.

Dilecti Filii,

Salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem.

Caritatem numquam excidere, sed ex ipsis invalescentibus miseriis et calmitatibus novum acrioremque in dies concipere ignem,

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(1) As it is impossible for us to publish in this Manual all the testimonies of paternal goodwill which Pope Benedict XV, of blessed memory, has given to our Society, we reproduce here one of the first letters which His Holiness deigned to address to the Council-General.

of miseries and calamities; this fact, already proved to Us, has been excellently confirmed by your recent letter destined to convey to Us the growth, during these latter years, in the number of *Conferences*, and the infinitely various forms of their charity. In sending Us these satisfactory statistics, you have meant,, Dear Sons, to put before Our eyes a spectacle worthy of the happiest times of the Church;it is fitting to refer such a result to God, we acknowledge it, without robbing your zeal of the praise due to it; We concede it to you the more willingly, as We see you more eager to attempt everything which can contribute, to second, and to develop such a salutary work, and to extend its benefits accum compertum Nobis erat, tum litterae egregie confirmarunt, quas superioribus dedistis diebus,, ut de aucto, postremis hisce annia, *Conferenciarum* numero ac de multiformi earumdem caritate. Nos certiores facere-tis. Nos quidem, Dilecti Filii lætabilica hæc, quæ vos ita scribendo persecuti estis, ut Nobis saluti præ oculis poneretis spectaculum optimis dignum Ecclesiæ temporibus ita Deo tribuenda agnoscimus, ut sua vestræ non desit dilligentiæ laus : eamque eo vobis impertimus libentius, quo propensiores vos cernimus ad ea omnia experienda quæ juvando provehendoque operi tam salutari ejusdemque beneficiis latius, prouti tempus necessitasque postulat, proferendis possunt conferre. In

cording to circumstances and the necessities of the moment. It cannot be denied that we live in a time which requires a christian charity as active as possible; but in the exercise of this charity We wish that the children of light should live as a model to others, that instead of unfurling the standard of simple philanthropy, they should look higher, drawing, and almost constraining those whom they help to the love of God, simply by the sweetness of christian fraternity. But We know that you and your brothers *bear yourselves as children of light, searching for that which is agreeable to God*, without *taking part in sterile works;* this is so manifest to Us that We acknowledge that this ea profecto incidimus tempora, christianam caritatem quam quæ maxime actuosam requirunt : at vero in eadem exercenda filios lucis ita velimus ceteris exemplo esse, ut non meram præ se ferant humanitatem, sed altiora spectent et ad Dei amoren vel ipsa christianæ fraternitatis suavitate eos pertrahant et quasi compellant quibus gratificantur.

Sed vos ac sodales vestros *Ut filios lucis ambulare, probantes quid sit beneplacitum deo et non communicare operibus infructuosis* adeo perspectum est Nobis, ut hortationi Nostræ vix ullum fateamur esse locum. Unum est quo indigetis, ope nimirum divinæ gratiæ : eaque ut abundetis in dies magis, vobis omnibus, Dilecti Filii, ceteris-

is hardly the place to exhort you in this respect. Truly the only thing you need is the help of Divine Grace; and so that you may enjoy it daily more and more, We accord, with a most willing heart, and in testimony of Our goodwill, the Apostolic Benediction, to you Dear Sons, and to the other brothers of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, in whatever part of the world they may find themselves. Given at Rome, at Saint Peter's, 31st January, 1916, the second year of Our Pontificate.

BENEDICT XV.
POPE.

que, quot-quot per orbem sunt, Vincentianæ Congregationis sodalibus, Apostolicam Benedictionem, Nostræ testem benevolentiæ propensissima voluntate largimur.

Dâtum Romæ, apud S. Petrum, die XXXI Januarii MCMXVI, Pontificatus Nostri anno secundo.

BENEDICTUS
PP. XV.

EXTRACTS FROM THE CIRCULARS

OF THE

PRESIDENT AND SECRETARIES GENERAL

OF THE SOCIETY

March, 1st 1837.

GENTLEMEN,—

The intercourse we now begin with you will be indeed most delightful to us. You know that one thing especially supports and strengthens us in this world—it is the thought of having near us friends on whom we can rely for advice and example. They who have friends lead a troofold life, and so do charitable societies when they have kindred orders.

You have indeed felt the power of such a Christian relationship, when you adopted our prayers and mode of proceeding. It was not the greatness of our deeds that could have struck you, since some of you have witnessed our poverty ; but you understood that men united under the influence of Catholic inspiration impart to each other an immense strength by their prayers, however poor they may be in

other respects. You have therefore become our brethren in order, to share and make us share in such Christian intimacy. We shall all profit, gentlemen, by this precious advantage derived from our faith.

Others hope to relieve without believing. They throw at random a few handfuls of money, that the poor despise as mere crumbs, and of no avail. We, too, do offer very little, because we are little, and because true charity is always poor like those whom it relieves ; but we have the charity of the heart, that can multipliy our might a hundred fold, and the poor who feel such things welcome us with honour. It is especially for cuch spiritual alms that we shall mutually be of great assistance, though far distant. When one of our colleagues in Nimes, Lyon, Rennes, Nantes, or Paris has comforted his poor, we, gentlemen, shall have rendered his task easier by our prayers, and shared in his labours.

Thus, all our Conferences may assist each other by their prayers ; they may also render assistance by communicating mutual information. We are happy to think that far from Paris, where the tumult is so great, your charity will make precious discoveries which you will transmit to us, and we shall, doubtless, often regret having so little to offer in exchange. The bonds that will unite us will be those of Catholic charity and brotherhood : there could exist no other ones. Though born a few

hours earlier than you, we shall certainly not presume to consider ourselves as your elders : charity forms families, it is true, but it confers no birthright, except upon those who show more love and devotion.

We inclose the report of the meeting held on the First Sunday of Lent. Hencetorward, we shall manage, after every meeting, to communicate the results of our efforts. We hope to hear from you before those meetings, the time of which is determined by our rules.

By, informing us of the amounts you have received and disbursed, of the increase in the number of your members, and in that of the poor you have visited, you will often show the power of your charity to us who are weak ; but we shall rejoice at it, for the success of brothers increases the love and esteem between them.

In the first ages of Christianity, the faith that animates us made our fathers write memorable pages, by which they taught each other to bear martyrdom. We, gentlemen, are very far from such sublime virtues, and our pages will surely not reach posterity ; but the homely correspondence which Charity inaugurates between us is nevertheless, due to the same faith. It will not make martyrs, but il will make men that love each other, it will make better men, and for that reason God will perhaps be pleased to make it fruitful and lasting.

LALLIER, *Secretary-General.*

August, 1837.

Gentlemen,

We have again joined in prayer to celebrate the festival of our holy Patron. The religious meeting of the different Conferences in Paris, in the church of the Lazarists, on the 19th of July, was followed by the General Meeting, the results of which we now transmit to you.

Besides that, since a relation is established between us, and we have learned to love each other, it seems to us an advantage to discuss, as much as distance will allow, the improvements which our Society will admit.

We may thus mutually impart information, and accustom ourselves to a more beneficial practice of charity.

You know that we consider as one of the principal objects of our labour the visiting of the poor; it is, in some sort, one of the conditions of our existence. Believing one of the strongest ties that can unite us all together to be a community of good deeds, we have resolved to do a little good to some poor families. Our rules treat mostly on this point, and should not be modified in that respect without the gravest motives. In case circumstances should compel us to do so, we must substitute other charitable works in the place of those we had adopted in preference. So have done the members of the Conference in Rome. As the distrust of the people made it impossible for them to visit poor families at home, they have

resolved to go to the hospitals and comfort the sick, and principally those of our countrymen who may be there infirm and abandoned (1). But in France the same difficulties do not occur, at least in general, and the visiting of the poor may be adopted by all Conferences.

In Paris, we call on poor families on behalf of the persons who have recommended them to us, and who are, in most cases, Sisters of Charity. Having been informed, through those persons, of their uneasy circumstances, we hope to be able to afford them some assistance, which we state will be very moderate. It is optional with every member to say by whom such relief is offered, or not to do so. Generally it is given as from a few young men who unite to do some good, but very little, because their resources are not great.

When the family has any religion and piety, an acquaintance is soon made, and the visitor has only to let the conversation take its natural course; he always finds means to drop in a few words of consolation and encouragement that are not lost; in most cases, he derives more advantage for himself from what he hears, than he confers by what he says.

When ignorant of the dispositions of the family we visit, we consider it a duty to behave with the utmost prudence and circumspection.

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(1) For a long time past the Visitation of the poor has been carried on in Rome without difficulty.

As far as possible, we wish to know thoroughly those with whom we deal. If, when unacquainted with their opinions, we yield to intemperate zeal, we would run the risk of never knowing what is going on in the family. They would conceal their true sentiments and show a feigned love of religion, hoping thereby to get greater assistance from us. Therefore, in our first visits we speak only of the material wants of the family. If we do so with affability and marks of interest, they at length show themselves as they are, and we gradually become acquainted with their habits and opinions. Then the visitor knows how to set to work to recall them to better feelings; he knows the strong and the weak points of the stronghold he besieges, and with perseverance he sometimes succeeds in taking it; at least he considerably weakens the garrison of absurd and irreligious prejudices that holds it.

We have often noticed that poor people are easily affected by marks of politeness, and we do not neglect this means of gaining their confidence. Taking off one's hat when one enters their dwelling, produces a favourable impression upon them. They are gratified when we accept the chair they offer; they are delighted if we seem to take some interest in the picture of their miseries and the recital of petty household annoyances. By such slight attentions, which cost nothing, a stronger impression is produced; their confidence and affection are sooner gained than by assistance, however plentiful.

One is no longer considered by them as a kind of public officer, belonging to some Board of Assistance, and calling every week to deal out regular supplies, but rather as a friend and adviser, to be applied to in the hard and painful emergencies of life.

However, too great and unguarded familiarity should be avoided. Otherwise the poor would not have that respect which ought to mingle with their affection for him who visits them. One may at times have to give some advice, to make some severe remonstrance. Words, in such cases, would lose a part of their efficacy, if too much familiarity had been used at other times.

In general, we try to remember that example does more than words for the improvement of our fellow-men. The meekness, the kind attentions, the piety of the man who visits a family, go much farther than his exhortations. The first condition imposed on every man who wishes to do good to others, is to watch, over himself and persevere in virtue. That we perceive every day. When we are less good, or indifferently disposed, then, too, we are less zealous, less inclined to charitable deeds, to the visiting of our poor families : we even consider this as a sort of touchstone that may show every one of us in what degree he is pleasing to God. If we feel happy when visiting the poor, these representatives of Jesus Christ, if we love them, if we willingly sacrifice a little of our time in order to be useful to them, we may hope to be

loved by Him who asks of us nothing but a little love, and who has said that the good done to the poor is done to himself. If, on the contrary, we do not feel desirous of visiting our families, if we put it off, or do it but reluctantly and in haste, it often signifies that it might be good to examine ourselves and to renew the piety and fervour of our soul.

Thus the work that we undertake of our own accord, is a means of improvement for ourselves : it is a new tie that binds us to virtue

It has, moreover, a great advantage in these times. Much is said in our days about improving the condition of the poorer classes, and there daily spring up a multitude of systems for so doing, not one of which is applicable, merely because the authors of them do not even suspect how matters stand in reality. We may be called on, at some further time, to give an opinion on this subject. Even now, it is our duty to relieve the sufferings of our fellow-men, as much as our fortune and abilities may allow. How can we do so, how shall we give directions and advice with a sufficient knowledge of the case, and the security of an enlightened conscience, unless we have examined and probed the wound which we undertake to heal?

We shall, therefore, gentlemen, be indefatigable in visiting the poor, because we are convinced that it is, in our days, one of the best methods of serving both them and ourselves.

As for you, do, we request you, in your turn communiate to us your reflexions on so impor-

tant a matter. You now have our view of it ; let us know your own opinions. Another time, we shall speak of other subjects, and by thus exchanging the feeble results of our daily experience, we may gradually accumulate valuable information regarding the practice of charity.

LALLIER, Secretary-General.

December, 1837.

Gentlemen,

The last months which have elapsed have done much for our Society. As you may see by the report of our General Meeting in the month of July, thre new Conferences have been formed in Paris ; also three others in the provinces. Thus the first impulse is given, and before long we shall have Conferences in nearly all the parts of Paris, and in many cities of France. Where we have no Conference, we may perhaps reckon a few isolated members. Many already are dispersed all over France; they ardently wished for some link to connect them with our Society. Henceforward, this connexion will be established by the report which is to be printed annually, and sent to all the members, as was decided at the close of last year.

This extension and the prosperity that seems to await our Society, have called our attention to an important point.

Our Rules had been written at a time when the only Conferences were the four original ones, formed in Paris, and they had become insufficient since many other Conferences had sprung up; certain articles were even not applicable to the provincial Conferences which had adopted them.

We believe that the time has come for supplying these deficiences; we should not, from an injudicious respect for an old test, expose ourselves to break, in any point, that unity which we are all so eager to preserve. We have, besides, made as few alterations as possible, modifying only what was not in accordance with the new dispositions.

The chapter which has undergone the most important modifications, is that which concerns the directing Councils. The direction of the Society was formerly committed to on ordinary Council. That Council consisted of certain general officers, not belonging to the Conferences, and it had been throught proper, in order to connect the Council with the Conferences, and the latter among themselves, to appoint also a Council extraordinary, including, with the general officers, the Presidents of the different Conferences. The latter Council thus indispensably completed the ordinary Council, and was convoked whenever any resolutions were to be passed, and carried out directly in the Conferences. But, as all the Conferences of the Society were located in the same city, the matters on which the two Councils had to deliberate, differed

merely in the applications, and therefore no precise distinction had been made between their departments. For that reason it had not been thought necessary to devote two distinct chapters to them. But when new Conferences were established in the provinces, the separate departments of the two Councils became more clearly distinguished. The extraordinary Council was especially the City-Council, and the ordinary Council alone had to deal with the general interest. Other names have therefore been adopted for them, and it has been decided that the ordinary Council shall henceforward be denominated the Council-General, as having charge of the general interests; and the extraordinary Council, Particular Council, as having charge of the particular interests of the city in which it is settled. Their organizations and distinct departments are developed in two separate chapters of the Rules. It is in Paris especially, where the two Councils both exist, that the distinction of their departments is to be preserved. Indeed, as immediate directions may be given by the General Council, the Particular Council of Paris, consisting of about thirty members, is rather to be considered as a Central Conference, connecting all the other Conferences together, and where all common interests are discussed. But in other cities, where Particular Councils have been, or may be appointed, the powers of these Councils, as well on account of their distance from the metropolis, as of the few members they include, must

rather resemble those of the Council-General.

So long as the two Councils had no distinct objects, the same funds were sufficient for the common interests. But as soon as they were separated, the creation of a particular fund, common to the Conferences of the same city, became necessary. There were in Paris private expenses and local charities that should not be paid by the central fund. On the other hand, the central fund was originally supported by such extraordinary donations as might be made to the Society in general, and by collections made at the general meetings : but as the provincial Conferences did not assist at those meetings, they bore no part of the general expenses. Those expenses have been very slight till now; but if, as it is to be hoped, and within all probability, our Society should hereafter extend considerably, they will necessarily increase much, and it is proper that the provincial Conferences should be enabled by our Rules to bear their part of that common debt, however inconsiderable. For that reason, we have laid down the principle that the provincial Conferences should annually send their offerings to the Treasurer-General. However, they may do so in the way they deem most proper, and in proportion to their own means, as private members do regarding the offerings they contribute to the fund of their own Conference. Thus all shall bear a part of the general expense, though none shall be bound by what others give; at the end of the year, only the

total amount received shall be published, as well as the uses to which it has been applied.

The first paragraph on the organization of Conferences, also had slightly to be modified. By Article 4 of the former rules, the Presidents of the different Conferences were to be appointed by the President-General. That article had been intended for the Conferences in Paris, and was not equally applicable to those in the provinces.

Therefore several of the latter, which had adopted our Rules on all other points, were compelled to modify that article. The new Rules give the appointment of the Presidents of Conferences to the President of the Particular Council. That provision is in accordance with the spirit of our Rules. It was spontaneously applied in Lyons, the first city after Paris, where several Conferences were organized and a Council appointed. As for the cities that have but one Conference, the new Rules leave the appointment of the President to the election of all the members of the Conference. That is also what was done in most of the provincial towns where Conferences were established. A few, indeed, have not stopped there, and have decided that not only the President's office, but also those of all the members of the Board shall be elective. Such a custom may be advantageous and even necessary in certain countries,, but we have not been able to adopt it, for it is not followed by most Conferences, and it even slightly departs from the spirit of our

Rules. It was thought that the different offices in our little Society would hardly be objects of competition : that the fulfilment of their duties would meet with no opposition among brothers all bound together by charity, and it has seemed preferable, in order to secure unity of direction, that all the officers should be appointed by the member whom the general vote has called to the highest office (1).

There still remained to provide for the isolated members. With regard to them, we have settled that, whenever a member of the Society removes to a town where there is no Conference, he shall be attached, as a corresponding member , to the nearest Conference in his province, and share not only in the prayers, but also in the good works of the Society, by performing deeds of charity around him. Thus a member who leaves his Conference shall not therefore become estranged from the Society; he shall still consider himself as an active member : only he must fulfil alone those actions which he did before with several associates. In that manner, the fire of charity will not die in him, and if new brothers should afterwards join him, they will find a focus around which they may unite and form a new Conference.

Lastly, in most cities the custom has prevailed of admitting into the Society, either as

(1) Experience has proved the wisdom of that rule, which is actually accepted everywhere

honorary members, or as subscribers or benefactors, persons who, without actively sharing in its labours, may nevertheless serve it by their influence or their fortune: that was, moreover, but developing an idea contained in the considerations prefixed to our Rules. But every Conference had to adopt certain rules for that development. We have thought proper, in this case, to lay down a general rule that all might observe; and it has been resolved, in the first place, that the Society shall have honorary members, who shall be considered on the same footing as active members, and therefore chosen with the same discernment, and appointed in the same form. However, as in the cities that contain several Conferences, they take no part in the labours of those Conferences, and do not belong to one more than to another, it seemed preferable then to reserve their appointment to the Council, which connects those different Conferences. In the second place, in order not to neglect the benevolent offers of such persons who, though unable to become members of our Society, do, however, take an interest in it, it has been resolved that every Conference may individually admit certain persons as benefactors, on what terms it may deem fit, and even without any terms at all.

Such are the additions made to the Rules, or rather the development of them in the new edition which we now publish and lay before you. It had long been expected, but the Rules to be adopted were too important not to

require mature reflexion. We therefore set to work only when further delay might have deserved censure.

If, while carrying out our design, all have not been consulted, all will see, at least, that we have endeavoured to act in conformity with the spirit that has till now guided our Society, and with the general usage. We are therefore convinced that this new edition of our Rule will be received with alacrity by all our brothers. We hope it may, by corresponding with all the developments of our Society, contribute to bind its members more firmly together, and secure its duration. We shall then think we have fulfilled the task imposed upon us.

LALLIER, Secretary-General.

Circular letter of the 14 th of July 1841.

Sir and dear Brother,

You know, what an unexpected extension Providence has given to the Society of *Saint Vincent de Paul*, which we lately did rightly call our *Little* Society. At present, this denomination is true only on account of the little we do, compared with all that should be done for those who suffer and need assistance. Let us pray, fervently pray, to God, that he may equal our good work to the number of those

who enlist under the holy and charitable banner of Saint Vincent de Paul.

We now reckon, dear Sir, more than sixty Conferences, either in the provinces or in Paris. From the large cities they extend to the less important towns: they even reach boroughs and villages; the smaller places tend to form a union so as to assist each other ; for if some contain few that are in want, others in the vicinity are filled with them, and the latter would be unable to afford sufficient relief, were it not for the assistance of their more affluent neighbours.

This sort of revival of practical charity among men (for Christian women had the meritorious privilege, if not of benevolent donations, at least of charitable deeds), this revival is a fact of immense importance which imposes serious obligations upon us, since it partly originated with us. By corresponding to Divine Grace, we may accelerate and extend it ; by neglecting it ,we may, on the contrary, retard and restrict it, and thus be an obstacle to the good it promises to the world at large. Effectively, if the sore of pauperism is to be partly healed, it seems likely to be so by that means; if the poorer classes can recover the first riches of all, if they can improve and become again what they are no longer, or at least what they are not everywhere — I mean, become again moral and religious — it seems that it will be by witnessing the examples and receiving, at the same time as relief, the enlightened and

Christian advice of men whom their worldly situation has made happier, and has in some manner placed above them. And do not even the latter stand in need of assistance to keep in the right path ? What assistance can have more efficacy than praying in common, visiting the poor regularly and in person, and doing all the charitable actions with the graces that God never fails to attach to them ?

When our first Conference which had grown too numerous, was separating, and on the point of forming distincte sections, we said : *Let us love our Rule ; if we keep it faithfully, we may be sure that it will keep us and our work.* It has, indeed, been faithfully kept by the Conferences; and to that we unhesitatingly refer, in a great measure, the wonderful increase of our Society, and the blessing lavished by God upon it.

Let us, therefore, Sir and dear Brother, be daily more imbued with the spirit of our work; let us consecrate ourselves to all the poor without any distinction ; let us always be full of esteem and deference for other charitable institutions; let us remain in close union with our pastors; let us form but one heart and one soul; let there never arise among us, any more than there has been till now, any dispute of words or discussion of precedence; let us be of no party than that of charity, and not descend to the meanness of sects.

That spirit of mutual abnegation of our members and Conferences, of our Society with re-

gard to all, the truly Christion spirit which has always animated the Association in general, has gained public confidence. On that account have the ecclesiastical and civil authorities in Lyons associated our colleagues of that city in the distribution of a part of the relief afforded by the public to the families ruined by the overflow of the river; on that account are they elsewhere, and at this very time, requested to assume the management of the Boards of charity, and all the resources prepared for the sick and the indigent; on that account has the revered Archbishop of Paris entrusted to them the care of guiding, in some manner, his own inexhaustible charity, by requesting them to collect information wih regard to the numerous applicants, for his assistance ; on that account have our Conferences, at first composed of young men only, been honoured with the accession of many men of virtue, grown old in the practice of good works.

What gives strength and activity, what brings everything to perfect order in our work, is the sincere love of the poor of Jesus Christ and the brotherly union of all members of the Society.

We are really animated, as you know, Sir and dear Brother, by no other motive than the sincere love of the poor of Christ; no other tie binds us to one another. In our Conferences, in the whole Society, everything is free and voluntary. Our association is an association of hearts, that no law. circumscribes, limits, or

regulates, except the laws of Christian charity, and an ardent wish to be saved by assisting our brethen in neeed. No member among us is above another member; no Conference has any right over another Conference.

This letter, dear Sir, and all the intercourse between us, is merely in the name of that Christian fraternity. I write because I have chanced to be the first President of the first Conference; then the Conferences grew numerous, and the Society expanded; it therefore seemed useful and sweet to the heart to maintain a connexion between all the different gatherings : it even became suitable or necessary to adopt regular means of intercourse. Hence the appointment of Secretaries for the correspondence, of a Council that is rather a link than a power, a Council to explain or solve the difficulties which are naturally referred to the original Society.

But all this has been imposed on no one; all is freely accepted and followed. From the Centre to the Conferences, and from the Conferences to the Centre, there is neither authority nor obedience; there may be deference and advice ; there is the same end, the same deeds ; there is a union of hearts in Jesus Christ our Lord.

I was anxious, Sir and dear Brother, to set forth fully that point in our existence, not in order to loosen the precious ties that unite us, far from it, but in order that the several Conferences may freely carry on and develop their good works ; so that it may be known as a

new motive of edification among us, that charity, and charity alone, has power to unite men and make them embrace virtue.

Under other conditions, with an organization more regular, more uniform, apparently more energetic, and which the zeal of several of our brothers may wish for on that account; it seems to us that our Society would soon be endangered by its very expansion.

And now, Sir and dear Brother, notwithstanding the above declaration, or rather on account of that very declaration, as I cannot be supposed to give anything but advice, the value of which you may freely appreciate, I shall answer some questions asked by several of our Conferences.

We have been asked if it would not be proper that a Conference should contribute to the establishment of a Catholic paper. We have entreated the Conferences that consulted us, and we do entreat all Conferences, to renounce such an idea. Our Society is a Society for action; it is not a tribune : it must never and nowhere become one.

How difficult it is for a periodical never to lean exclusively to one side! In that men of powerful mind have failed. Still more, how difficult to hurt no one, while constantly discussing! *The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is all for charity*, so say our Rules; *it has nothing to do with politics.* A periodical paper does always, more or less, treat of politics.

We have also been asked if men of honourable feelings can be admitted as members, though not yet Christians. We have answered that the members of the Society should — 1stly, do honour to their faith by the practice of a Christian life; 2ndly, be able to assist the poor, however little it might be.

If the latter Rule were not observed, admission to the Conferences would become the object of persons seeking assistance from them, instead of giving any. It is easy to conceive what serious changes our meeting might soon suffer thereby. As for the former Rule, we assuredly are not the judges of our colleagues; we have not to descend into their consciences. We may even, with due caution, admit to our assemblies men who are not yet so fortunate as to follow religion, and to whom the example of their happier brothers may be profitable; but we have deemed that no one could be inscribed among the members of the Conferences but after embracing and assiduously following the duties which faith imposes upon us. We do, besides, request those who intend to present a candidate, never to fail previously to confer about it with the President, who has more especial charge of the direction and honour of his Conference. The presentation is then made by common agreement between him and the friends of the candidate, and there is reason to believe that it is made because it ought to be. Moreover, we can do nothing better than to refer, on that point, to the general advice con-

tained in the prefatory considerations already mentioned, relying on the wisdom and zeal of each President for the application of these rules.

As for the new Conferences, it is most important that those of our brothers, who resolve on establishing them, or who are consulted about their organization, should insist upon the spirit of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, as wholly and solely Christian and charitable.

Last of all, Sir, and dear Brother, I cannot finish this letter without this most earnest request : *never neglect visiting the poor in their homes.* The visiting of the poor in their dismal homes is the distinctive character of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul; the Council has even exhorted the Presidents of the Conferences in Paris to go themselves and visit all the families adopted by their respective Conferences; to visit them every three months, the better to know their wants, and to ascertain whether they are regularly visited. Let us, therefore, courageously enter the poor dwellings which poverty is too often compelled to live in; but it is not enough to enter them; let us sit on the half-broken chair which is offered us; let us converse with the poor; confidence will thus be gained, and we shall become acquainted with their sufferings, their wishes, may be with their vices. We shall know what advice we ought to offer; we shall see that the children are sent to schools, to good schools ; we shall save them from vagrancy by apprenticing them to some trade. Thus you shall have foresight

for your poor, who are often regardless of the future; yea, you shall be their providence, and open better prospects for them. Ah! what a comfort for a young man, to be able during his whole life, to turn his looks to a family that he has thus assisted, raised from misery, and perhaps rescued from the thraldom of vice! Who can tell what graces God will pour upon his life to recompense the generous deed that has marked its outset? Do, Sir, do often repeat such things to the young members of your Conference, and exhort them thus to honour the outset of their life. To them I promise that God will then crown it gloriously. His word is formal and never deceives.

We shall continue to pray together, and comfort by the same means the poor of Christ, our brethren; we shall continue to love one another in God, under the patronage of the Mother of Charity, the Divine Mother of Jesus. That union will be our strength, much more than our Rules. Though we do but seldom meet, we shall nevertheless know each other well, in the heart of Him from whom every good thought come, to whom it returns, and to whom we ourselves shall go!

What I write, dear Sir, is not from me, personally ; it is from all those of our Brothers whom I have seen; it is more especially from the members of the Council who have desired me to compose this letter, and to whom I shall read it before sending it.

Let me not forget to add that they have also

requested me to recommend that in your conversations among yourselves, in your reports, there should be nothing against any benevolent institutions, whether public or private, nothing against what is called official charity. We must let others do good in their own way; we must even believe that, in general, they do better and more than we.

And now, in the name of the Council, in my own name, in that of the Conferences you have assisted, I thank you for what you have done in behalf of the poor of our bretheren in Lyons and Nimes, during the inundations. You will receive a detailed account of the sums received and expended.

I remain, Sir and dear Brother, the most devoted of your brothers.

BAILLY, Président.

Circular of the first of December 1842.

Dear Sir and Brother,

I wish, in the name of the Council General, to confer with you, for a few moments, on the interests of our beloved Society.

Let us first return thanks together to Divine Providence which gives our Society so rapid and encouraging an advancement, and which, by so particular a favour, maintains the true

spirit, the spirit of simplicity and charity of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul.

We shall infallibly deserve new advancement and be called upon to pursue the good we do, and to begin more, if we grow more and more confirmed in that spirit which was that of our holy patron, which appears in his whole life and all his maxims, which presided over our first beginnings, and which we have, as far as possible, inscribed in the introductory considerations of our Rules, or rather in those Rules themselves; for these considerations are our real Rule, that which should inspire all other Rules, and, by giving a common direction to our efforts, preserve unity among us, notwithstanding the difference of means and usages which different localities may require.

Let us therefore read those short reflections over and over again; let us even meditate over them in the spirit of faith; they are not, if we may say so, the word of man, or at least they are the word of man sanctified, of a man whose sayings and whole life God has crowned with heavenly glory. In reality, Sir and dear Brother, you are aware that those thoughts are taken from the most intimate writings of Saint Vincent de Paul, from the Rules which he laid down after many years experience for the blessed works which he had instituted, and to secure their increase and durantion.

Next to those common precepts which we follow, there is nothing that can better preserve the spirit and unity of the Society than the mu-

tual intercourse of the Conferences; and the Council General, which is, in most cases, the channel of that intercourse, realises every day better what are its own duties in that respect; what it can, what it should do to connect, to incite to good, through one another, all assemblies of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, to extend, wherever it can be done ,the imitation of the new methods, of the pious devices of charity, that are disclosed and employed in any local Conferences.

The General Report, that has at length been published, does nore especially display, dear Sir, all the advantages that may be derived from our intercourse, if properly understood. From all quarters we receive for this important communication thanks and testimonials which gladden our hearts and clearly point out our duty for the future.

We hesitated long before writing this Report, and we then made it as plain and brief as possible, so much do we fear exposing the Society to that public notoriety so unsuited to associations of Christian charity, and which has been the loss of so many!

And, as we speak of publishing, we shall mention that, in some Conferences, the custom of printing funeral orations tends to prevail. There are certainly less objections to the praise of the dead than to that of the living howerer, may not vanity, which steals in everywhere, have its share in a public eulogy of our departed brethren; ought it not to be merely

among ourselves that we weep for them and recall for our own edification tfe memory of their good examples? To us it seems that such manifestations should at least be very rare, and made only in quite particular case, and after mature consideration.

But, if the publishing of what is good is some times liable to objections, the exposing of what is wrong is still worse; so, for instancce, should any temporary disagreement arise in one of our assemblies, should any Conference meet with illwill and annoyances abroad, it ought to be most careful not to permit it to be published. Some of our Conferences have earnestly requested that we should make this a general recommendation, and we easily understand the importance attached to it. A wrong made public is scarcely ever repairable. A priest of much wisdom, virtue, and experience, one day said to us that the conversion of any man not publicly engaged in the wrong path is but an ordinary matter, whereas a miracle is required to overcome the obstinacy and pride of him who had bound himself to his errors by public manifestations. In so saying, he alluded especially to unbelievers; but his rule can be applied to others also. If you unfortunately disagree with a person, so long as the matter rest between you and your brother, remedy is at hand, and reconciliation easy; but, if once you are compelled to appeal to public opinion through the press or the law, union can be restored only by a special grace from above. You will find

an enemy at every time and place opposing your interests; and a charitable Society, placed in such circumstances, will doubtless have raised an irreconciliable enemy against all other Christian Societies.

We should never forget, dear Sir, that we live to promote union and not division; if we wish to attain that charitable end, we must be ready to suffer in silence. Are we not the disciples of Him who raised the world by his voluntary humiliations : have not the Saints been glorified in proportion to their humiliations? Such is the great mystery of the Cross, which you know as well as I, and practice better. To be great, we must lower ourselves, and a Christian association will secure so much the more useful and glorious destinies, as it makes and deems itself more trifling and more humble.

In thus warning you against habitual publicity, we mean it with regard to our personal concerns or those of our Conferences; but we carefully except all projects, attempts and methods for affording our suffering brethren more rapid, certain and abundant relief. Thus we ourselves have encouraged and recommended to you the little *Manual of works of charity*, published in Paris, and which may be had at our Secretary's office. That publication was not made in the name or at expense of our Society, but it was made at our request by one of our Brothers, a member of the Council-General. Its object, is to show many methods of assisting the indigent, methods which the most charita-

ble man is often ignorant of ; and also to enlighten, facilitate, and shorten his laborious and generous efforts (1).

I shall not close this letter without mentioning a few facts that have attracted our notice, and also transmitting some advice from the Council-General.

In a few localities, some Protestants, animated with charitable intentions, have asked to be admitted into our Conferences. We have thought it our duty to answer that we do not deem it possible to give our separated brethren that proof of affection and of our wish for a more complete and still happier union. Effectively, our object is not only to afford the poor some material relief, but to comfort them, to excite them to the practice of Christian virtues, which is the most efficient of consolations; and therefore to bring them to use the Sacraments and perform all the salutary acts prescribed by the Catholic Church, and which alone do effectually improve, convert, and comfort the heart, But a Protestant cannot loyally and without deceit undertake such an office

We have been asked if it was allowable to apply a part of the funds received by donations or collections in the Conferences, to some charitable purposes different from the works specially adopted by them. To us it seems that

(1) This Manual has since been re-edited several times.

it should not be so. In the first place, it would be departing from the intention of the donors; in the second, such a latitude might cramp consideraly works which we hae ourselves adopted. By aiming at everything we should finally do nothing, for a charitable Society that attempts too much is soon exhausted. By choosing a few good works, we have not promised to apply ourselves to all.

You will excuse me, Sir and dear Brother, if I seem hereby to limit the effects of our zeal; but wisdom should be temperate, and a wish to render your efforts more efficient and durable is my only motive in giving this prudent advice which some may judge too timid.

We should deem it a greater danger, if, adhering too literally to our name of *Conferences*, the origin of which is well known to you, we were effectively to discourse upon charity instead of being satisfied with doing its deeds. It is the office of our pastors to expose our duties to us; it is ours to discharge them. We have not to teach each other by discourses, but to edify one another by mutual examples. Beware, I entreat you, of the spirit of discussion, and the habits of the public tribune. We do not mean to blame that spirit in itself; discussion is good and necessary, when applied in the places and to the subjects which require it; but our Society is one of action, it should do much and talk little; we must leave to our Officers and Boards the burden of discussing what has to be discussed; let our Conferences in general

retain the consoling charge of good deeds. The speeches of the Conferences are the common prayer to God; His divine Mother and our Holy Patron; the christian exhortations and consolations to the poor.

On such terms, but on such alone, — by being a Society of good works, without or above all parties and political sects, — will the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul live and continue its successful advance.

In a few Conferences, it has happened that some members, detained by their business, have called the poor to their houses to give them at the same time good advice and effective relief, instead of going to visit them in their homes. That is less contrary to our institution than sending assistance to the poor through servants; the latter method can never be too severely reproved; nothing would more radically destroy the Society. There has, however, been but one single instance of such an abuse, and you know how strongly we remonstrated; we sounded the alarm; as if the enemy had been at our gates. We trust the sound is still in every ear, and we shall be so watchful of one another, as never to allow such a misfortune to re-occur.

As for the other method just mentioned, we also disapprove of it. The foundation, the every essence of our labour, is the visiting of the poor in their dismal homes; we must see them in rags, amidst all the disorder and distress of their misery, improvidence and discou-

ragement. Such a sight is both a lesson to us, and a motive of devotedness to them. Should they come to us, instead of our going to them, the same result would not be obtained. Is it not plain also that the spontaneous visit of the member who brings assistance, secures for him a moral ascendency over the indigent family, that will never be obtained when a person of that family comes and listens to him with interested views? Let us, besides, look still higher : the poor are the friends of Jesus Christ; they are His members, they are Himself; Christ considers as done for His Divine Person what is done for any of them. Saint Vincent de Paul says « that he who speaks to a poor man and bestows charity upon him, ought to figure to himself and be well assured that he speaks to Jesus Christ Himself, and assists the Divine Saviour in person ». Which of us does not envy the shepherds of Bethlehem their happiness? Well, that happiness we too enjoy when we visit with faith the poor in their homes, in their humble mangers, I might nearly say in their stables. Like those happy shepherds, let us then eagerly perform that pious duty let us run to the cellars, the garrets, wherever the Divine Child suffers in the persons of the poor; let us approach those wretched hovels with respect, veneration and love; we must yield that privilege to none. A great favour was granted to a few humble shepherds on the very night of our Saviour's birth: and a great favour also is allowed the members of the Society

of Saint Vincent de Paul, in being called to the honour and the benefits of visiting the poor. Let us never suffer so glorious an advantage to be diminished, let us visit the poor of Christ, visit them ourselves, visit them in their homes.

Your respectful and very affectionate servant and Brother.

BAILLY.

Circular of the 1st of March, 1844.

Sir and dear Brother.

From several quarters we are asked to renew communications such as those formerly transmitted, and between which complaint is made that we have left too long an interval. It had seemed to us that the General Report, now published yearly, could, and should, take the place of many other means of mutual edification and intercourse. It contains, for the example of all the Conferences, the charitable efforts made by each of them; it relates, whatever is of importance to the Society, the usages that should be followed; it cautions us against the abuses and dangers to be avoided. However, the call is so kindly made, and so strongly expressive of the spirit of union that animates the whole Society that it will not allow us to remain deaf to it; we therefore, address this letter to you, in order to answer both your

wishes and those of our own hearts, always happy when they pour themselves into yours.

There are besides, a few rare subjects for which there is no room in a communication of so general a character as is the Annual Report; those we shall consider in a special manner.

We have observed in our brothers a double tendency or a double and contrary apprehension : some of them are frightened by the lay character of our Society; others think that it would be prejudicial to the work, if it were to be raised to the dignity of a Brotherhood.

We think that we must remain what we are, and that all our wishes and our endeavours should tend to that end. Let each of us become more christian and more charitable; let us praise to their highest value and esteem as superior to our Society the other christian associations, those brotherhoods, so much honoured for the good they have accomplished, for their long standing, for the virtues and the piety of their members. Let us deserve to be personally admitted into them, but, on the other side, let us understand that needs may change according to times that works, founded on faith, however unchanging in principal they may be, have always been modified in their action according to those various needs. And if we do not want to trouble ourselves more about it, it is enough to know that our Society exists in the capital of the Christian world with the approbation of the common Father of the faithful; that it is blessed by the Church in all

countries, where it tries to establish its modest works; if there is still anything wanting in our Society, if in some degree its form has to be modified and improved, let us be patient; time will do better than ourselves. God never fails to support right and peaceful intentions; what he condemns and repels, what is beforehand rendered barren or even becomes a seed of death, are the restlessness and the exertion of mind as well as empiricism in spiritual things. More improvement and more usual reforms are obtained by the spirit of peace, by moderation and by good example, than by all the rules and all the endeavours of a so called zeal, whereas under that name self love and exceeding attachment to our personal ideas are too easily disguised.

And even though our Society, in its actual state, should only be for the Christian the means of knowing and understanding each other, although it should be but a vast novitiate, which, as already happen every day, would supply with members other works, better and holier than ours, would it not be yet a grand mission, especially if that novitiate is performed under the protection of and in practising the first of all virtues, the immortal virtue of charity ? Would it not be for us a sufficent motive for clinging invincibly to what may be and is really the spring of so much other good, and, on trying to keep pure that precious spring, of leaving and making it accessible to as many of our brothers as possible?

As for the qualifications to be sought for in our Presidents and other Officers let us never forget the rule laid down in this pious maxim: neither science alone, nor piety without other advantages, does render a man fit for the conduct of his brethren, and the affairs of God. Teaching is for minds rich in human knowledge: *Doctus est, doceat nos.* As for the men to whom Heaven has granted the invaluable gift of piety, let them pray, pray earnestly, for their brothers: *pius est, oret pro nobis.* He alone is marked out to be the servant of the rest, to lead and direct in christian works, who joins an acknowledged superiority of mind with a mind truly in accordance with his faith, a great spirit of conciliation and prudence : *prudens est, regat nos.* Time brings experience, and experience is a great master; it often gives in a great measure, that wisdom, that ability to judge the minds of other men, that support never to be discouraged, in short that prudence, the first virtue of those who are called to the management of men and affairs; but even here we should not be absolute. Let us remember that we are dealing with things of the faith, and not with human beings; and God inspires whom he chooses, and as he chooses. Saint Bernard, when still a youth, was already the head of a vast reformation; and if we may compare little things with great ones, we shall ask if those of our Conferences which are managed by quite young men have always been the least in fervour and wisdom ? The Society

of Saint Vincent de Paul was begun by a few young men and for young men; therefore a peculiar virtue seems attached to their action among us, at the same time that a great portion of the favour with which the public views our Society, comes from its being known to consist principally of young men. But, in order that it should continue recruiting among the youth of the schools and other situations of life, the young men must be set forward among us, they must appear in the first rank. However, our choice should fall only upon such of our younger brothers as unite modesty and precocious wisdom with true piety, and are, in their turn, always mindful to have recourse to the counsels of age and experience.

The men to whom God has granted wealth and leisure, are bound to the performance of a greater number of works of charity: those acts for them take the place of the anxieties of business and the incessant toil to which humanity is doomed: they seem, therefore, more fit than others for the direction of those christian societies that require much time. However, let us not be exclusive in that respect. All conditions, all ranks are and should always be included in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul; moreover, if charitable deeds ought to fill the time of the man of wealth, they ought also to suspend and sanctify the cares of the public man, of the man devoted to a liberal profession or engaged in the toils of trade; and even we may often find in the latter an expe-

rience of men and things which the former does not always possess.

First of all, then, in the interest of our Society let us consult the requirements of each locality; let us be grateful if those of our brethren consent to direct us, whom we shall deem more able to maintain among us the original spirit of the Society, its wholly christian spirit, its spirit of peace and simplicity, its modes of action, its accepted and salutary proceedings, the charitable union and activity of its members.

But, at all events, instead of wasting valuable time in useless operations and discussions, let us go to our little good works, and give them all the time and leisure it has pleased divine Providence to grant us; let us continue that visiting of the poor in their homes which has been the fundamental work of our Society, which the essence of our Society, that visiting which will make it live, which has already borne so great fruits of salvation, and will continue to sanctify us, if we faithfully adhere to it. What sublime and salutary thoughts, what useful reflections on ourselves are effectively inspired by visiting the poor and conversing with them !

Thereby, we daily learn to know their misery better, and thus better to appreciate what we ourselves have received from God.

The visiting of the poor is then our great, our only business; that which should first of all engross the time of the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The patro-

nage of children has, I acknowledge, made much development among us, because indeed that patronage is a natural and necessary consequence of the visiting well understood, of the conscientious and christian visiting of the poor. How could we not feel inclined to take an interest in their children, in the salvation and future welfare of those little and interesting creatures of God, deprived of human assistance, to whose help heaven itself seems to call us by sending us into their parents' wretched dwelling ?

If to the visiting of the poor, well and regularly performed, we add, dear Brother, a true spirit of charity to each other, the future success of our Society is assured, and God will heap His blessings upon it.

I mean here charity in its fullest sense : I mean that every Conference should rejoice in the progress made by other Conferences; that in every one of them any good thought, any good deed should be confidently and joyfully welcomed. We are all brothers, there are among us no masters that can command the rest; we owe and merely give each other friendly and brotherly advice. Let that advice be given and received in the same spirit, thus disposed we shall reject no reasonable proposal, no serious improvement ; nothing is so injurious to the union of a Society and its progress, as a tendency to fear every manifestation, whatever it may be, to suspect from the first, or even to reject every idea that did not origi-

nate with ourselves, to subject to a rigorous and impossible uniformity, and to the same measurement the free and spontaneous actions of our brethren, the different wants of several localities.

Our Society is essentially free; besides, every one of us is variously acted upon by divine grace; every one has his own way of doing good; we should not impede then the various manifestations of the Holy Ghost; also our Society extends to many different places; now the good, to be successful, must be done according to the spirit, tendencies, necessities of those places. We must, doubtless, guard against exaggerated condescension; it is true that every spirit is not holy; but till we have proof, or at least plausible reasons for suspicion, we should welcome every intention that seems good, every effort that appears to be made for God. Moreover we learn from experience that many things, which in themselves were good, have been jeopardized in the execution, solely because they had been rejected without sufficient cause, and by a first impulse, which raised a spirit of opposition and contention, where at first there were but good intentions and worthy desires.

How many good resolves have often failed, how many exemplary sacrifices, on the eve of execution, were stopped because some one forced and as it were imposed them ! We must know how to suggest what is good, if we wish to obtain it; above all, we must not refer to

ourselves and take as our own what has been proposed and done by others. Humility allows us to conceal and forget our own charitable efforts; justice commands us to give to every one what belongs to him. In short, let the Presidents, the members of the Councils, let all the Officers never forget, we again beseech them, that Christian prudence is no less a virtue than zeal; let them never forget that that virtue alone entitles them to any influence over their brethren.

I have long been, Sir and dear Brother, a sharer in your labours; I do not hesitate to say, from my knowledge of the Society, and of the manner in which it has grown up, that it owes its institution and progress to that spirit of justice, confidence and true charity, to that christian freedom with which it has constantly been animated. If, therefore, dearest Brother, as I have often wished and asked if the time had come when another should, together with the Council General, become the link and centre of our common union, if I had to take leave of you, and make, as it were, my last will, these should be my parting words : Be indulgent and just to one another; oppose no good intention among yourselves, do not oppose any kind of good; those who are called Presidents have no mission but to preserve order, to maintain and encourage whatever is good. On that depends your union, which is your life and strength.

Be therefore, closely united; let the provincial Conferences continue to support by their example those in Paris, let the latter do the same for those in the provinces. Let us be true brothers, happy and not jealous of our mutual advantages; brethren, nothing else, but brethren in Jesus Christ, united by the closest ties of charity, under the patronage and supreme direction of the Church our mother.

To those counsels shall I add, that nothing could be more opposed to the original spirit mentioned in this letter, than to seek fame, splendour and external applause! The General Report, let it be well understood, has not been adopted with a view of ostentation and publicity; we have considered it in the first place as a means of brotherly union and holy emulation between the Conferences; we have, besides, hoped through it to avoid the necessity, and supply of many different and expensive publications. We ought especially to manage so as to attract as little as possible the notice of the public papers; we might almost blame some Conferences that have courted or used the publicity of their provincial papers.

Let us also carefully avoid collections in private houses; they too easily give rise to suspicion against those who undertake them, and they are liable to shocking abuses. The name of our Society has already been several times usurped by persons, who have thus obtained important sums of money. I am well aware that such abuses are rather to be feared

in large than in small cities, and most of all in Paris; but that method of securing assistance for the poor is everywhere objectionable, and besides the civil authorities may have the legal right to forbid it. Let it therefore be well understood everywhere that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul makes no collections in private houses for the relief of the poor.

The Society has nothing to do with girls' schools (1) in any place; that care it leaves to others. The original Conferences had all agreed on that subject, which I recall for the information of the new ones.

For the present I have only to say that the Council, to which this letter has been communicated, shares in all the feeling and wishes expressed in it and assures you, dear Brethren of its sincere affection. Mine you know already; allow me to renew the expression if it, and to be respectfully yours.

BAILLY.

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(1) This prohibition must be understood in the sense that none of our brothers are to take part in any way in the patronage of the scholars of these schools : but they will be performing an excellent work in encouraging by all means in their power the opening and maintenance of Christian Schools, for girls and in the recruiting of scholars.

Circular of the Council-General dated June 11th 1844.

Dear Sir and Brother,

The Council-General herein transmits to you the letter by which Mr. Bailly communicates to the Presidents of the Particular Councils and Conferences, the determination which he announced to the Council-General at meeting of the 9th of May :

« Sir and dear Brother, my last Circular must have made you foresee what I do now declare : I have tendered my resignation to the Council-General; henceforward another President, a Brother who can devote more time to the Society, one better qualified for the office by his station and virtues, will, with the Council, bind the Conferences together.

« I was, in some manner free from domestic cares, when the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul first arose. Our Society itself while small, required less time. My family is now numerous, and our work has taken immense extension. Your prosperity on the one side, imperative and more multiplied duties on the other, have imposed upon me the necessity of a resignation which my own interrest and that of the Society equally require.

« For a long time already the assistance of several of our Brothers had been indispensable to supply my own deficiency, and I can never

return adequate thanks for what they have done, both for me and the Society; these thanks are especially addressed to the Secretaries of the Council General, and of the Council of Paris; never shall I forget their zeal and kindness, the confidence they have shown me, the pains they have taken, the time they have sacrificed.

« I have now, dearest Brother, but two things more to do, equally dictated by my heart; first, to tell you how deeply I feel the confidence with which you have honoured me since the origin of your Conference, and which by constituting the centre of the Society has given it more strength than any slight service I myself may have done it; secondly to beg your pardon for all the good that I have either not done, or done badly...

« And since I speak of advice, Sir and dear Brother, though I am no longer entitled to give it, allow me to remind you of a saying of our holy patron. Saint Vincent de Paul, you know it well, held « that those who wish really to be called ministers of charity, should not even speak among themselves of the earthly interests that divide the powers of the world. » That rule indeed he meant for priests ; but it may, in a certain degree, apply to all christians who associate together for works of mercy. They should keep it, if they wish to remain in cordial union, and enjoy that tacit and universal approbation which constitutes the influence of a Society, facilitates its progress and secures its du-

ration. We have often repeated that maxim; it is one of the traditions to which we have adhered from the first; for us, it is inseparable both from the labours of the past and the interests of the future.

« Now farewell, Sir and dear Brother, farewell. I should grieve still more than you, did I not believe that this farewell, which is not a separation, let me say it again, will more than ever unite us in Jesus Christ. I close with the words addressed to our Brothers, when the first of all the Conferences had, on account of the number of its members, to divide into several sections : « Be of good courage, gentlemen : assembled or dispersed, far or near, let us love each other, love and serve the poor... Much evil is going on; let us do a little good. » What was then said to your predecessors we now repeat to you, our younger Brothers, we say to all the members of the Society; let us all do, do promptly, a little good, and God will repay us a hundred-fold.

« Farewell again; I am ever your respectful and devoted Brother. » BAILLY.

We need not tell you, Sir and dear Brother, with what deeply felt emotion the Council-General has received this letter of Mr. Bailly. Indeed, you all know, and none of us will forget that it was Mr. Bailly, who in 1833, at a time when many good men, still afraid, stood aloof from good works, conceived the thought of assembling for charitable purposes, under the

patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul, a few young men, very far from expecting the happy increase which we now witness (1). It was he who supplied them with a place of meeting, who assisted them with his advice, encouraged them by his example; he taught them to draw near one another for mutual support, to recruit abroad, to help the poor, and in short, whatever they learnt in that first year, when from their little meetings came the demand that caused the Sermons in Notre-Dame to be instituted. When our ranks had filled up, and we had to reduce into rules what had been mere usage, Mr. Bailly wrote the introductory considerations wholly inspired by the maxims of our holy Patron, that determined the spirit of our Society. By developing them in several circulars, by all the acts of a laborious presidency, for the space of eleven years he preserved unity amidst the increasing number of our Conferences in Paris, the departments and abroad.

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(1) Frederick Ozanam, the writer of this circular, has, from a sentiment of humility magnified to an excessive degree, the part payed by M. Bailly in the foundation of the Society, in order thereby to diminish his own. It was in vain that his friend, Leon Cornudet, implored him to modify this text, in order to approximate it more nearly to the exact truth. The historical researches brought about by the centenary of Ozanam's birth have indisputably established that it was he himself who played the principal part in the foundation and the early extension of the Society.

As soon as Mr. Bailly had informed us of his irrevocable determination, our first impulse was earnestly to beg him to remain one of the Council. We represented that, though he might cease to be the President of the Society, he should never cease to be its founder, and that as such, he still owed, he would always owe to it the support of his experience and his kindness. We are happy to announce that Mr. Bailly has yielded to our unanimous wish.

After fulfilling that first duty, the members of the Council immediately took the steps preparatory to an election, and tried to agree as to the person that might seem worthy to succeed to our President. Impressed with a deep sense of the responsibility they had to bear, they sought to safe-guard their conscience bh two methods, the one was prayer, the other a scrupulous observance of the Rules. For a week the Holy Ghost was invoked with fervour, and Mass offered up with that intention : three meetings were held on the 15th, 18th and 21st of May, to confer without haste, passion or restraint ; and after mature deliberation, the following points have been agreed upon :

It was first acknowledged that in a growing Society, the principal object of which is to forward the revival of faith and charity among men and in which is to be found every kind of age, habit and human opinion, the office of President calls for numerous qualities, a rare merit and a man that can not easily be found, unless God should point him out. He must

have great piety, in order to be an example to all, and perhaps still greater gentleness, in order not to discourage others by too rigid virtues : he must have the habit of devotedness, the spirit of true fraternity, the experience of good works; he must join with the zeal which founds, that prudence which preserves, he must be able to maintain the Society in the paths of simplicity and prudent liberty, along which God has led it until now, and nevertheless not discourage the well inspired efforts that may be manifested. In short, his character must attract confidence, and respect, while his gentle familiarity renders him the friend of the younger members in the numerous family united around him.

These qualifications the Council has found united in the person of a man who had honoured the Society by joining the Conference of Saint Sulpice; a man whose consummate wisdom and high virtue have long since deserved public esteem, whose name is well known to the poor, loved by Catholics, respected by men of all opinions, Mr. Gossin, formerly a Counsellor in the Royal Court of Paris, the Founder and President of the admirable Society of Saint Francis Regis. Mr. Gossin is one of those men seldom met with in our days, solely divided between his family, study and good works, whose mature age, full of energy, can suffice for all labours, and whose noble heart is capable of every act of devotedness.

The Council General unanimously proposes his name.

In thus informing you, Sir and dear Brother, of our preparatory deliberation, and whilst awaiting the time when the election is to be made, we request you, according to our Rule, to inform your Colleagues of the steps taken by the Council General. Secure in the consciousness of having followed no human consideraion, we ask you to assist us by your prayers and fraternal advice. In compliance with Article 40 of the Rules, you will be so kind as to consult your Brothers, and have the *Veni* Creator recited in the Conferences, while the election lasts. In a matter of such importance, we need all the inspirations and blessings of God. To Him alone belongs the right of choosing the instruments of the little good He allows us to do, of blessing him whom. He is henceforward pleased to employ, and rendering his mission easier by our zeal, our habits of christian simplicity, our warm and persevering union.

Believe us, etc..

For the Council-General :

The *Vice-Presidents*,

A.-F. Ozanam, Léon Cornudet.

The Secretary,

Louis de Baudicour.

Circular of the 15th of August 1844.

Sir and dear Brother.

The Council General of our beloved Society, after strictly complying with the prescription of the Rule, on the 23rd of July, elected a President-General of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul. Their choice having fallen upon me, notwithstanding my deficiencies, and the objections I had the honour to submit to them, requesting that they should appoint some other person less unworthy than I am, it was my duty no longer to decline the burden imposed upon me : I have therefore accepted it. On the same day, I assumed the office, and two days later, on the 25th ult., I presided at the General Meeting of the Paris Conferences, under the auspices of our Most Reverend Archbishop.

At the same time that I inform you, dear Sir, of this change in the situation of one of your newest brothers, I feel compelled to express in this place, my feelings of deep gratitude to the Conferences of Paris, the departments, and foreign countries, which although I was not personally known to them, have evinced, in placing me at the head of the Society, a promptness and confidence, such as claim a whole life of devotion in return. I eagerly embrace the new and serious duties imposed upon me; no sacrifice will seem too great for their fulfilment.

It required nothing less than so kind and affectionate a unanimity to induce me to succeed

in the place of Mr. Bailly, to whom all the Conferences have so justly paid the heartfelt tribute of their gratitude and regret.

Mr. Bailly was the founder, the moderator, and the father of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (1). The eminent services rendered by him in those different capacities are of a character to be ever remembered.. . . . . .

But, with the exception of that great change, now accomplished, that has called by general vote one of your brothers to hold the place which Mr. Bailly so worthily filled, the Association of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul remains unaltered. On the one hand it renounces none of its works; on the other, it does not wish to step beyond its sphere, the modesty of which is so well suited to its humble charity and limited resources.

You know the object of our Society; it is, not to hold discussions on charity, but to practice it, using as our principal means visits to the poor at their homes.

The members of the Conferences have besides in view *to do good to themselves, first* by learning, if I may say so, the history of material life among us ; I mean by learning how thousands of unfortunate persons, some of whom have enjoyed a brilliant position, live, languish, suffer and die unnoticed by the world;

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(1) See note, p. 41.

Secondly, by nourishing in their own hearts the feelings of compassion placed there by God, but which require to be cultivated by the practice of good works, purified and supported by religion in order to rise to the dignity of *Christian charity*.

Thirdly, by promoting acquaintance among themselves, mutual esteem and affection, notwithstanding all their imperfections : by taking advantage for a closer connexion of that sort of *ready-made* friendship, to which heaven itself has seemed to invite us, by making us children of the true Church, of that Church which draws its life from the Charity of Jesus Christ, *the eternal suavity of angels and men*, according to the admirable expression of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Fourthly, and lastly by inspiring all with an ardent and sincère love of their country, the happy birthplace of every species of kindness devotion and sacrifice; of France, where alliance of generous hearts in favour of all kinds of sufferings and miseries, it so prompt, easy and lasting, and for which says Bossuet God sums *to have felt at all times, something more paternal and tender than for other nations.*

The Society will preserve, as heretofore, its lay organization and its lay direction, for its prosperity and even its existence depend on that condition. However we shall congratulate oursellves on remaining in frequent, close and respectful communication with the clergy, entirely convinced as we are that the Catholic

priests will be for us the guardian angels who alone may maintain us on the way of christian charity.

If it be possible for us to give material help to our poor and to say to them discreetly a few encouraging and comforting words, yet it has not been given to us who are mere laymen and christians without any authority, to search into the conscience of the poor, in order to know its wounds, to fathom and to heal them. Passions of all kinds, vices, remorse, weariness of life, despair and those numberless sorts of misery, that the soul is a prey to, are far above our science, and, in any case, our competency.

A special mission has to be given by God to cure such miseries ; if your hands have not the power which comes from the Blood of Jesus Christ, if you do not speak with the authority of His word, you cannot undertake the resurrection of a lost soul and make it again the reflection and the likeness of its Creator. How great indeed is in that admirable work of the regeneration of repenting sinners, the share of merit to be got by the layman, who, after bringing on and encouraging regrets and amends for lost innocence and a disorderly life, has hastened, without losing any time, to call the heavenly healer! But the complement and the final stamp of conversion are due to the priest, who alone may say the words of eternal life; who alone has the power of purifying; reviving and comforting the poor human heart; who

even lastly, by the conversion of only one sinner, may bring joy into Heaven.

Blessed be also, for our poor and for ourselves, those precious bonds which, without infringing upon our customs and our ways, will unite us more and more to the clergy.

Let us reckon as our happiest days those on which the priests, and, from time to time, the princes of the Church, our fathers in faith, deign to share in our little works and looking favourably at our zeal, consent to honour us with their presence and to enrich us with their blessings.

Instructing us, sometimes listening to us with interest, always understanding us and in the midst of their engagements and their work, being our advisers and our models, in the way of charity which they know so well, as a distraction and rest, those men of so high, and, at the same time so indulgent a virtue, have become our *greatest benefactors*, since they gave to us, as soon as they knew us, the protection of their esteem and the encouragement of their friendship.

Let us return thanks to them a thousand times for so much kindness ! I feel very happy to pay here to our holy Bishops and to their co-operators the homage of our attachment and of our constant veneration.

We shall never cease to do our good works, banishing from our assemblies whatever might, far or near, resemble politics. In fact, we are assembled to do good to the poor *and to our-*

selves, by improving our hearts and minds. But politics, which have caused the shedding of many tears, have never been able to dry a single one. Let them therefore be ever banished from among us. So long as God, in His mercy, averts from our assemblies that perpetual leaven of discord, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul will be prosperous, and reap the blessings of the poor. On the contrary, if we were to allow the voice of politics to be heard ever so little among us, the morsel of bread which we give to the poor would change to stone, and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul would be destroyed.

Such is the light, Sir and dear Brother, in which I have always viewed and do more than ever view our Society. I dare say no member of our many Conferences considers it differently. Such a concurrence of all minds and hearts on those capital points, on which the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is founded, is, we must confess, a signal grace of God, a most special and singular mark of the protection with which He deigns to cover it, and lastly a precious indication of its duration and progress, as well as of the abundance of fruits of peace, consolation and salvation which it seems destined to bear, Our gratitude for so great a favour should excite our piety to thank God every day; for it may be said, without exaggeration, that thereby most of all, the protecting hand of a kind Providence over us has made itself visible to all eyes.

As for the action of the President of the Society, in concert with the Council-General, it remains what it was under Mr. Bailly. Mr. Bailly has said it in his circulars : the President and Council-General are nothing but links intended to connect the several Conferences, and preserve among them the spirit which presided over the institution of the Society and its developments...

The sole object of the President and Council is, I say so again, to preserve among all the Conferences that identity of feelings, affections and practices, which have till now been the charm, prosperity and harmless force of our work.

The members of the Council-General who have seen the birth of the Society are the elders of the family; without claiming for themselves the least privilege of birthright that might be onerous or offensive to the others they merely say to their younger brothers far dispersed : « *Dear friends, in our father's house we did this, abstained from that, and everyone was the better for it. See if you wish to preserve those traditions of your birth-place.*»

It is then to be hoped that, through this affectionate intercourse, which will always be, on our part and with the grace of God, very far from every taint of pride and desire of domineering, we shall continue to agree, and especially to love one another. Yes, we shall be able to keep up in Conferences that happy likeness of a common origin, which makes us

at first sight recognize our blood, and family, even the effect of the sweet milk sucked at the breast of the same Mother, Catholic charity taught by Saint Vincent.

Such are, Sir and dear Brother, the truths I had to acknowledge, the hopes which I deemed it my duty to express on entering the office to which I have been called. The union which is the charm of our Conferences, can only gain by these first effusions; but I heartily wish for the opportunity of forming with you, and our Brothers of the departments and abroad, a still closer connexion. My wish will be fulfilled.

It will often happen, Sir and dear Brother, that some members of your Conference will come to Paris, either on business, instruction or amusement; I shall feel highly gratified if they do me the honour to call upon me, and I hope not to forget in these interviews, which will always be precious to me, these charming and ingenuous words of our holy Patron:

« Cordiality is a joy felt by our hearts when we see a person we love; it is a gushing of the heart by which we show that we are glad to be with a brother. That joy spreads over the whole person; it is a fruit of divine love, united with that of our neighbour. If charity were an apple, cordiality would be its colour. »

Believe me, etc.,

JULES GOSSIN.

Circular of the 8th December, 1844.

Sir and dear Brother,

The sole object of my circular dated August 15th, was to inform you that our Society had a President, and that nothing else was altered in the happy relation that makes all the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul one and the same family. I was obliged to reserve for a further communication several subjects of interest and importance. It is of these I now wish to treat.

To love our Society the offspring of the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul, is the first condition for fulfilling with zeal the serious but most sweet duties it prescribes! To cease finding any pleasure or interest in its assemblies, or merely to attend them at rare intervals would be almost to take indefinite leave and withdraw from the career of charity. It should not be misunderstood, that the day and hour of our meeting call upon us to be this day what we were a week ago. We have taken charge of one, two or three families! shall we neglect to go to the meeting where we are sure to get some relief for them? We shall not dare to do so, if we think of that *really daily* bread which the Conference deals out only for a few days, that none of us is allowed to save and hoard up for the wants of the future, and which is to fail to so many hungry mouths unless we take the trouble to go for it.

Woe to us if we should yield to the temptation of making our alms separate from the rest, and visiting the poor independently, only when we feel disposed and quite at leisure. We must not deceive ourselves; our virtue is always deficient in some place and weak on some point or other. We must especially guard against the inconstancy so natural to man. It is therefore useful for our poor, and most useful for ourselves, to be warned, and in some manner summoned, by the hour and day of our meeting, to be punctual in doing a little good. A virtuous man needs that kind of periodical call in order to remain the same. Should we once set aside the yoke (however light and mild) which our Society lays upon us, should we resolve to do good to the poor at our most convenient hours, separately and free from the example and assistance of our brothers, it is greatly to be feared that, amidst our occupations, business and pleasures, the time reserved for our poor families will recur but seldom, or even never. The poor will be put off from day to day, and then finally dismissed. Pretexts will never be wanting to banish troublesome recollections, that are not exactly remorse, but resemble it. In short, our slothful charity will seek its justification, and believe it has found it in the few coins that we may have thrown, once a year, in the charity-box of a church.

Let us be candid, and not seek to delude ourselves. Did we often go and visit the homes of the poor, before we belonged to the Confe-

rences of Saint Vincent de Paul? No! Well, we shall not go any oftener, when once we have yielded to the temptation of renouncing the holy emulation of which the Society is the centre. The poor will lose a friendly protection; but we, still more unfortunate than the poor, shall have partly extinguished in our hearts that flame of charity, which Jesus Christ, who condescended to become a man, and passed on the earth doing good, had raised there both to enlighten and warm the world; that immortal flame, which, since the Saviour's mission, has suffered in the Church neither alteration nor eclipse, and under the influence of which have sprung up, during eighteen centuries, the magnificent works of catholic charity. So soon as that divine fire has ceased to consume our hearts, we must indeed fear lest selfishness, the love of vain pleasures, and the multitude of trifles that amuse human life, should again break into them. Let us then never forget that if we cease to serve the poor, we shall suffer the greatest loss; for Jesus Christ and his graces have always been, are at present and till the consummation of ages will be, with deeds of mercy.

In thus expressing, Sir and dear Brother, the grounds and reasons of the deep attachment we should feel for our Society, my object has been to prevent the withdrawal of a few of our brothers, who might insensibly grow forgetful of our meetings.

To this day, I thank God for it, the Society has had to deplore but very few of those prolonged absences that resemble abandonment itself, and almost everywhere a multitude of new members have more than filled up the seats left vacant; but it is of importance to endeavour to render such painful losses still more rare, and especially to resist a much more general tendency: I mean irregular attendance at our meetings.

Indeed it is only by assiduously attending those meetings that we can take an interest, in the matters to which they are devoted. A member who merely calls in accidently is almost a stranger to the action of the Conference, and thus he too often prepares those indefinite absences which we lament.

But, if the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have duties with regard to the Conference to which they belong, these in their turn are bound by obligations which they can neither omit or neglect to fulfil, without endangering the very existence of the Society. I mean *first* the necessity of appointing a day and hour for the weekly meeting: *secondly* never to close any meeting without making the collection prescribed by the Rule.

In several Conferences, however, both these fundamental rules of our Society are totally overlooked.

It is enough that I have mentioned this double and serious omission to be assured that regular habits will, in those Conferences, take

the place of that sort of carelessness imcompatible with te attending on anhd relieving of our poor.

I know that such apathy is peculiar to Conferences which have most limited resources and very few members ; but a Conference should above all guard against abandoning itself. No assistance is to be had, if it is the first to despair of divine Providence, and to exempt itself from the weekly collection...

May I however be allowed, Sir and dear Brother, to point out to you a tendency the danger of which has been acknowledged in Paris and in important towns ? I mean the eagerness with which workmen and the poor rush to those places with the hope of finding there work and help. God forbid indeed, it would ever occur to any or us to reject any kind of misery, because it comes from afar, and to confine, as it were our charity within the narrow bounds of the towns in which we are living ! No, the poor, wherever they may come from, are entitled to our pity, as soon as they are suffering. The poor are the living likenesses of Jesus Christ and wherever we may find them, we ought to comfort and to welcome them. But if charity is universal and regardless of places and people, it has however to be prudent in order to be useful. Now, if we only speak of what happens every day before our eyes, how many poor do we not see who are only in distress since they have arrived in Paris ! How many times, in our visits, have we not listened

to the story of those bitter delusions, which have taken the place of mad hope of fortune and happiness !

Also, Sir and dear Brother, I wish you to take a particular notice of it and, when you hear from your families that they intend to stay in one of those towns in which the poor fancy that all misery is relieved, we entreat you, in their interest, to make them consider the consequences of their scheme. A few are so lucky as to succeed, but most of them go to wreck and you may say truly that you can hardly find in Paris poor people who were born there. On this point, if you wish to prevent your families from coming to a regretable decision, it will be prudent to take the advice of the Conferences in the towns where those families intend to settle, in order to ascertain if there is plenty of work, if it is easy to find employment, if, in a word, this change of residence is to be useful or prejudicial. The spirit of charity and brotherhood in all our Conferences makes us sure that our brothers will not yield to that too common feeling which prompts people to get the poor out of their way instead of helping them, and, at the same time, by their experience, they will spare their poor ruinous travelling expenses...

Another abuse that, particularly in Paris, the attention of the Conferences was drawn to, in consequence unhappily of too many complaints, has been the attempt of certain people to give themselves out as the representatives of our

Society, either in order to make collections in private houses, or to get subscriptions for religious or literary publications. It has been settled amongst us, since the foundation of the Society, that, if we may resort to the charity of our relatives and of our friends, or if we may even try to commend to public charity, the cases we are helping, that in order to avoid dangerous mistakes, we should never call at the houses of people whom we are not acquainted with. The only remedy to that evil is therefore to protest on all occasions against the regrettable facts we are alluding to and to avoid giving pretext for such a prejudicial mistake. Therefore we think it expedient to recall here the rule which has been adopted by many, Conferences and according to which all recommendations and applications to strangers are reserved for the President alone. For, whilst in this way it is more difficult for those people who are so kind as to prize a little our recommendations, to be imposed upon, it serves that other eminently useful purpose of preventing the Conference from binding itself and going too far, without the President considering the consequences of such a step. In a Society, as large ours, that is spread in so many countries with the same name and the same custom, it is unnecessary to remark how prudent and judicious such precautions are.

To close what concerns the poor, Sir and dear Brother, I have only to insist in a few words upon certain important precautions, that

we can never neglect with impunity when we visit them. In the first place, we should always require of the poor persons whom we assist, that they should show their certificate of marriage either civil or religious, and the certificates of baptism of their children. Recent experience has convinced several of our Brothers that such caution is never useless, and the cases which they have witnessed have made them wish to have this observation mentioned here, since in the course of a few months, and in the same Conference, it was found out that two couples, recommended by most worthy persons, and considered as honest and christian, had been legitimately united neither by the State, nor by the Church. It is no rare occurrence either to see in poor families, children of 3, 4 or 5 years old, or even adults, that have not received the sacrament of baptism. Let us therefore make it a rule, if not at our first visit, at least when we are sufficiently acquainted with the family, never to omit so necessary a precaution; our kind mode of speaking and gentle words, the wise discretion which charity will suggest, will always soften, even in the most delicate circumstances, what might seem painful in such an inquiry.

It is also proper, and this is the second point which I presume to recommend, to question the poor about their first communion, since it is but too true that many of them have never accomplished that imperative duty, and therefore, live in a distressing state of religious indifference.

I need not enlarge on the subject, Sir and dear Brother, to make you understand how important it is to ascertain that capital point in our visits. It is however sometimes neglected ; but then our confidence is often abused, when afterwards we meet with men totally devoid of the first notions of religion.

We must therefore use with them a language suited to their peculiar dispositions, and no good is possible so long as we have not impressed their soul with those fundamental truths which make a christian; the words of the Church are dead for them, and we must first of all recall to life those minds killed by scepticism and practical atheism.

Setting apart, Mr. President, our General-Report for the end of each year, a communication, which from its nature and object must necessarily include many details, I shall venture to express a desire: it is, that several times a year, you should be so kind as to write to us, so as to let us know how your Conferences are getting on, and their good works progressing.

In proposing this idea, Sir and dear Brother, it is not my intention to depart from the Spirit of our Society by introducing among us the habits of what is commonly termed *red tapeism*, in the world. I merely state how happy I should feel if I could render our relations more frequent. I shall even say that by such means, alone, the President and Council-General can well know and appreciate the progress of our Society, its developments and tendencies; and

certainly cases may occur in which it will be of use for the whole Society, that we be tolerably well informed of what concerns every one of the scattered portions of our large and beloved family.

A true affection, for it is founded on the charity of Jesus Christ, binds the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul together; it binds to one another not only the members of the same Conference, but even those who, not living in the same city, are, according to appearances, never destined to converse together, or even to see each other. That feeling is no imaginary and sterile affection; although no occasion may occur of manifesting it. But let a circumstance arise that brings together two members of the Society, as yet unknown to one another, and immediately the zeal and affection that exists between them is revealed, not only by the cordiality of their language, but also by their courteous welcome, obliging proceedings and deeds that bear the mark of true benevolence. Suppose for instance that a young man who belongs to the Society should be sent to Paris to follow his studies ; there is not one of us who will not consider it both a pleasure and a duty to receive him, introduce him to a Conference, give him the direction and advice which he may need for the selection of a residence, for his studies and modest amusement, in short to serve him in all things according to the dictates of prudence and dscretion, the true guides of propriety. But shall we conclude from

thence that whenever one of our Brothers leaves the province and comes to Paris, either for a lawsuit, a commercial speculation, or to solicit admission or advancement in some public office, the Conference to which he belongs ought to recommend him for one or several of these purposes, either to the Council-General, or to one of the Conferences in Paris, or even more especially to one of us in the Metropolis, *in his capacity as a member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul ?*

I do not think so, and in support of my opinion, it will suffice, Sir and dear Brother, to call your attention to the many serious inconveniences that would infallibly result from the contrary mode of procceding.

So soon as any personal services rendered to our colleagues from the provinces by those in Paris, *in the pursuit of some office*, would induce people to believe that, at least as an accessory to deeds of charity to the poor, one may find in our Society, means of *promoting one's own interests*, the Conferences would soon swarm with persons, who from interested views would shed rather tardy tears on the wants of the poor, in order to gain for themselves in our Society, protection, support and means to break through the crowd and rise in the world.

The jealousy of disappointed rivals, added to malignity, ever on the watch in our days, to detect at least pretences for calumny, would soon denounce the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul as spreading over France, and in all admin-

istrations, a vast system of intrigue, in order to monopolise all offices of honour and profit, and secure the success of some commercial speculation or other...

Up to the present, we thank and bless God for it, the spirit of the Society has not been hurt by the rare demands that have been addressed to us from motives of personal interest; the abuse does not exist, but it was necessary to anticipate it. Let us then remain what we are; let us practice charity, and following the advice of Saint Vincent de Paul himself, *keep within the limits of that virtue...*

Saint Vincent de Paul says somewhere that the earthly paradise, like the heavenly one, is found in charity, and that among all good actions there is none sweeter than visiting the poor, provided that, in the presence of great sufferings, we try to look up to God, in order to take from the heart of our Lord a few words of consolation. He says elsewhere that he himself never felt more intimate joy, than when he was so happy as to serve the poor; and he once related that having asked a Sister of Charity, on her death-bed, if anything pained her at that moment of struggle and anguish, he had received this answer : « *I reproach myself with taking too much pleasure in serving the poor.*»

Assuredly, Sir and dear Brother, we ought to respect the touching soruple felt by that saintly woman on the point of appearing before the supreme judge of men; but we, men of the world, who every day commit so many faults,

should beg of God to reduce the anxieties of our conscience, at the time of the fearful passage, to the sole reproach of *having taken too much pleasure in serving the poor*, and that slight blemish, which will doubtless be forgiven us before we depart, will not prevent the poor whom we have assisted on the earth from coming, according to the promise of our holy Patron, *themselves to open to us the gates of heaven.* Believe me, etc.

JULES GOSSIN.

Circular of the 2nd of July, 1845.

Sir and dear Brother,

In several of the Conferences we notice a rather pronounced tendency to prefer the patronage of school-boys and apprentices to the fundamental work of visiting the poor in their homes. There are cities in which indigent families see our Brothers only at distant intervals of time; in other places, the relations that existed between them, for the greater advantage of all, have almost entirely ceased.

Assuredly nothing can be more attractive than the care of childhood. The patronage of school-boys and apprentices deservedly occupies a considerable place among the works of the Society, and no expense seems too great to confirm and extend the practice of it; but we are convinced that it would be a grevious mistake

to consider that patronage, however excellent it may be, as an adequate substitute in any place, for the visiting of the poor at their homes.

It really requires only very short reflection to be convinced that patronage alone is radically insufficient to occupy a Conference, and even that the other special works, whatever they may be, can only bear all their fruits ief we visit the poor, while the work of visiting the poor may, absolutely speaking, supply the place of all special deeds.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul permanently appeals to the men of faith, who, burning with the flame kindled in them by the miraculous alliance of divine charity with human weakness, feel the want of constantly doing good to their brethren, according to the precept and example of Jesus Christ. The devotedness of all, united in order to serve the poor and please God is the life and harmless force of our Society.

But that ardour for good requires employment; daily nourishment is necessary for it, and the mere patronage of children is then insufficient.

Unless they wish to seem troublesome to the masters in the schools, and to the foremen in the workshops by visits paid either too frequently or with too many persons, our Brothers particularly devoted to the care of the children must be few in number. What will then be, in the field of charity, the lot of our other

friends, if the Conference gives to that work only all its time and resources?

And besides, children are amiable, and all are happy to speak with them; but whether they be good or docile or turbulent and refractory, little is to be said of schools-boys in a weekly meeting. The account of the good marks awarded does not move an assembly (1).

But when the poor are visited, how much the Conference is moved by what is related, at every meeting, of a certain number of families that it has adopted : there is always something new and sometimes unforseen among those who have been visited. The illness of an old man, the marriage of a couple at last reclaimed from disorderly life, the first communion of a child, clothing to be given to this one, sheets to be lent to that other, work to be procured for all, the recital of a good action or a kind word to some poor person, the sincere return of some to their religion, every detail possesses an interest and a charm, every thing provokes the communication of useful thoughts, brings on the expression of generous feelings; we cherish the more and more for the sake of God; we endeavour especially to love more that God of cle-

(1) Whilst recognizing the accuracy of the observation of Monsieur Gossin, we deem it right to remark that since 1845 the Work of the Patronage has much enlarged its field of action and that it requires a very much greater number of workers. — (Note of the Council-General 1888).

mency, who has placed within our reach so easy and so sweet a method of expiating our daily errors; we like the Conference, we regret leaving it so soon, we resolve not to fail to attend the meetings; we return home with contented hearts, and we are right : we have done a little good, prayed to God, seen pious and christian friends : all that is happiness!

This is not a mere picture drawn from the imagination : it is the faint expression of the remembrance that I have preserved and shall always preserve of the Conferences to which I have belonged, and in which the visitation of the poor was, is still, and will always be, made with diligence and with that charm which the works of God inspire in hearts in union with Him. In all the Conferences in which the same things are done, the meetings, far from being tedious and monotonous, always pass too rapidly. Let those who doubt it at least try the experiment, and the same results are everywhere guaranteed.

And what especially makes the visiting of the poor eminently precious for us, is the fact of its being peculiarly , we might even say intimately, connected with the organization and proceedings of our Society.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul being composed of ever changeable elements, and of men of all ages, nearly all very busy, no work of charity could suit it so well as that, to be and remain its fundamental work.

The apprenticeship to it is neither long nor difficult. In order to know how to assist the

poor it is merely enough to love them, and daily experience shows that here more than elsewhere is the case to apply this profound saying : *Amor notitia est.* For, when we call on the poor with the words of faith on our lips, christian vigilance in our eyes and compassion in our hearts, we quite easily understand the misery, the vices, faults, hopes and fears of those at whose hearth we have sat, and it does not require long lessons to find out the means of remedying so many evils. If such cares as these devolve upon those who undertake them, they do not however absorb all their time; they do not require a mathematical regularity that cannot be afforded by all. Provided we visit the poor, the day and the hour is of no consequence: and it is often even better that the visit should not be made at fixed intervals, lest those we relieve should thereby grow accustomed to them as to a right and a sort of income.

The other good works, on the contrary, and especially that of the patronage of apprentices, do not present those characters; and, to speak only of the last, we shall call your attention, Sir and dear Brother, to the regularity and invariable assiduity which it requires. If we wish to have any influence over children, we must know and see them; and, in order to know and see them, must be among them at fixed days and hours, we must be able to dispose of our time beforehand, and at least for a whole season; for you know as well as we that the success of patronage is a labour of perseve-

rance and that without continuous endeavours it lingers and falls. But all cannot freely dispose of their time : we may even say that very few can do so : therefore it has been noticed that the Conferences which adopt exclusively that interesting but limited work, have much fewer members than those which, on the contrary, join it with the visitation of the poor.

Let us add that the visiting of the poor is the necessary complement of all special works and that without it, none can be brought to perfection.

If you restrict your solicitude to collecting the papers necessary for the marriage of a couple, your good works will remain unfinished, for you have not done what you could to induce the parties to receive with due preparation the benefit of the nuptial blessing.

If you limit your charity to patronizing children in the schools or the workshops, without knowing their parents, without calling upon them and endeavouring to render them better you are building upon sand. In vain will you try to inspire those children, outside of their home, with the love of all virtues, if every evening, when they return to their family circle, they find there example and encouragement of all vices. Of what use will it be to have taught them hymns in the day, if at night they go to sleep, or rather are awakened by the noise of swearing and blasphemy?

Visiting the poor offers, on the contrary, the

immense advantage of making us thoroughly acquainted with all the members of the family. An assiduous and attentive visitor will soon know if the parents are married, if they have made their first communion, if the children are baptized and go to school; if there is union in the family : if its misery and diseases are the results of vice or undeserved misfortunes. Every thing speaks to our eyes and minds in that intercourse with the poor. Yes, in those homes everything has its signification, inanimate objects themselves and the very walls that are seen in one house adorned with external signs of religion, and in another exhibiting impious or immoral pictures. In two or three calls we ascertain whether the wife is cleanly and saving, the husband laborious, whether the children are educated and know their prayers.

Is it not plain that after such a complete study of the moral and material condition of a family, catholic charity will, with its genial breath, give birth to all the good works that are required to remedy the evils before its eyes? It is because we see the poor, because we go to their homes, because we breathe the same air which they themselves breathe, that we think of visiting the sick in the hospitals or at their homes, of sanctifying the union of the parents, of taking care of the children, and in short, of providing by all sorts of good works for their miseries that are renewed under so many various aspects.

We have now, Sir and Brother, only to

answer an objection sometimes brought forward on this subject.

New Conferences very often fancy that, if they undertook the visitation of the poor, they might seem to enter into competition with Associations already existing for that purpose, or with charitable Boards. To us those fears seem to be quite groundless. In fact when we see how little good can be done even by the most flourishing Conferences, and compare it with the alms distributed by hands more rich and more powerful than ours, the only thought that can enter our souls, but without the least bitterness, is that of our inferiority. Most of the Conferences adopt, in general, no more than two or three families for each member; and how insignificant is such a proportion in a city that reckons any considerable number of poor persons! Indeed no one can consider us the competitors of preexisting societies; to all we shall seem only desirous of gaining for ourselves the merits attached to visiting the poor, and anxious to accomplish a charitable duty. Is it feared that our assistance may be given to persons who have received from other hands? But it is so slender that we need not be uneasy if sometimes our tickets reach those who have received, or are about to receive more abundant supplies from elsewhere.

Our share will then be always slight and unperceived; we must only learn to increase its merit by the perfection to which we try to bring it.

I now come, Sir and Brother, to two recommendations of great interest, and directly connected with the principal object of this letter; I allude to the candidates for admission, and the young men who arrive in Paris, every year in November, to follow the course of their studies.

It is very desirable that the custom of associating with the Conferences young men under eighteen should extend and become general. The practice of charity is agreeable to man, even in his fallen condition; it is a necessity for him, when, before the dangerous time of youth, the participation in the most august of sacraments has kindled in his young heart a few sparks of the ardent fire with which Jesus Christ consumes and enriches the world.

It is high wisdom to appease that want, and implant charity deeply in that soul, before the stormy wind of passion has arisen in it. By early directing his thoughts, occupations and pleasures to works of mercy, we shall with charity, give that child, on the verge of manhood, a second guardian angel, if we may say so.

So, one of the good results on which our Society may congratulate itself, is the habit that the Conferences have of recommending to us those of their members who arrive in Paris, there to complete their studies. Indeed it is always a hard and painful trial for the faith of a young man, to be far from the support of his parents and friends, and to begin his career in a city where so many vices and tempations are

to be found by the side of so many virtues and admirable examples. Experience teaches every day that, notwithstanding the sound principle of christian education, some may fall most deplorably, and that of all preaching the most efficacious is good example. How happy then it is for a pious young man to take his place in our modest assemblies, to be immediately surrounded with brothers truly christian and devoted to the poor, and to enjoy the sweetness of that ready-made friendship that comes from catholic charity! Instead of seeking elsewhere his pleasures and relaxations, he will understand that one may be cheerfully virtuous in Paris, and that, after all, none are more worthy of love than young men who fill our Conferences, and on whose brows may be admired that serenity, peace of conscience and gladness of heart whose indefinable union constitutes what an ancient called the *colour of virtue*. Therefore we gladly see this practice perpetuated, and we do most earnestly wish it to be developed, confirmed and extended more and more among us, in order that, partly through the influence of our Society, a greater number of pure souls should be preserved from the infection of vice. That happy end will be attained, if our young brothers, whose inexperience needs to be guided in this vast city, are careful to call upon us *at the very moment of their arrival in Paris*, and express the wish of being immediately introduced to our Conferences.

I have now, Sir and dear Brother, to close

this long letter with my opinion, and that of the Council, on a subject the importance of which is every day pointed out by our correspondents.

From the beginning of our Society, it has always been the custom to close our meeting by a collection; that collection has long been our principal resource, and we should wish it to continue essentially so.. In fact, if it is often our duty to carry alms that have been entrusted to us, we must, first of all and always, devote to the poor the offerings which our circumstances allow us to dispose of; we are volunteers under the charitable banner of Saint Vincent de Paul, and our company should always serve at its own expense. That offering, moreover, should always be secret, so that some of us, who have not received from God the gifts of fortune, should not have to blush at the smallness of their alms ; while others, more favourably treated in that respect, might be tempted to pride themselves on having more largely contributed to the common work. These customs are essential, and serve in many respects to keep up in the Conferences the spirit of charity and sacrifice, the spirit of christian humility and equality. Therefore we have been sorry to hear that in one or two Conferences, those customs had undergone some alteration, that the collections were no longer seriously made, and in their place a fixed contribution was adopted. Certainly the poor must have been the losers by that arrangement, for nothing stimulates zeal more strongly than the

weekly offering made every time after the miscries of the needy have been set out ; and in such circumstances a voluntary sacrifice far exceeds the limited tax imposed beforehand. But, above all, the spirit of humility may there by be seriously impaired; for it is principally to themselves that the Societies founded on catholic charity should apply the saying of our divine Master : *let not your left hand know the good done by your right.*

Thanks to God, union and cordiality prevail in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul; its spirit is one of deep aversion to all that resembles dispute and contention; of abnegation of our own sentiment, and deference to those of our brothers. That spirit has made it live and prosper till now, and will secure its progress, if it will persevere in such principles. Let us then remain what we are, and remember that, if we were ever to depart, in that respect, from the traditions of our holy Patron, our Society would be immediately destroyed, its intimacy would vanish, our meetings would cease to be attractive, nor could we hope to find abroad a tranquillity that we have now known how to preserve at home.

« Belovet brothren », said Saint Peter, addressing the first christians, « be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, being lovers of the brotherhood ferciful, modest, humble » (1).

(1) I. Peter III. 8.

Let us not forget this touching advice, but follow it, and the grace, peace and life of our Lord Jesus Christ will always be with us.

Believe me, etc.,

JULES GOSSIN.

Paris, May 31st, 1846. Feast of Pentecost.

Sir, and dear Brother,

Nearly one year has elapsed since the last circular which I had the honour of addressing to you, on the 2nd of July, 1845.

Since then, I have often wished again to address all the Conferences, and several of them kindly requested me to do so, complaining that I left too long an interval between two circulars. However I have thought it proper not to yield so soon, I have chosen to wait still longer, in order thoroughly to ascertain on what subject I ought more particularly to address some new communication. After mature reflection, it has seemed to me that, at a time when the Society reckons a great number of Conferences placed in countries independent of one another, that have neither the same language, nor the same laws, manners or customs, whose sole tie of union is the standard of the Catholic religion, and sole password *Charity*, it is right to insist first of all upon the necessity of

keeping up the original spirit of our Society. Indeed, unity can subsist among so many scattered branches of the same family on this condition only, that we should constantly remember the object of our Society and the means used till now to preserve and extend it...

Being the last comers in the career of Christian Charity, in which we have been preceded nearly every were by civil or religious institutions of remote origin, and being as to alms only able to distribute some essentially variable in their amount and always far inferior to the necessities of the poor, we candidly acknowledge that humility should be enjoined upon us as primarily appropriate to us were it not besides, and in another regard, the first of our duties. We should therefore show sincere respect for the charitable institutions which we find in existence around us, and avoid with them a rivalry, of which vanity, pride and self sufficiency alone might reap all the fruits. Let us be satisfied with the share allotted to us; we shall not grieve if we seem to do little; but then, let us seek our consolation in the desire to do as well as we can the little, which circumstances allow us to undertake. We shall above all beware of the temptation of employing human means to call to ourselves the notice of the city and to provoke in our favour any public demonstration that would denote that we are held, or that we hold ourselves, in high esteem and great consideration. The seeking of these

human means to secure the success of our works, is quite in opposition to the general counsels of Christian wisdom...

It is moreover condemned by the maxims diametrically contrary, taught and practised by our holy Patron throughout his long career. Humility, courage and trust in God, such are the virtues whose union and happy concurrence should form, as it were, the ground and basis of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. But we have to enter into more details and say something about the inner life of the Conferences.

The Council-General has several times been asked whether the position of a member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was an obstacle to the acceptance of certain duties either in other charitable institutions, or on the Charity Boards.

The Council-General has always been of opinion that there could be no objection, should a member of our Society accept duties by which he might add to the good works peculiar to the Society other works not belonging to it, but no less meritorious, since they would always tend to the greater good of our fellow creatures and the greater glory of God. That opinion is easily justified. It has been said with truth that the life of a Catholic really deserving of that august name, associates itself naturally with the vast number of the proofs of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Considering the matter in that respect, it is quite desirable that a member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul should

enter any official Charity Board. In the world (we must acknowledge it since it is a fact) very unfavourable prejudices are often entertained against men of real merit, solely because, as they openly follow religion, people are inclined to believe them unsociable. They are honoured with distant and cold esteem, but their Society is not desired, because it is supposed that being christians they must *of course be embarrassing*. Indeed, it is quite proper that those of our brothers who, notwithstanding prejudices, that are daily abating, may be appointed to some Charity Board, should unhesitatingly accept the proferred honour.

It follows from our general rule and our constant custom that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has a lay character. It is with due knowledge that such a form has been given to it since its foundation and that the Sovereign Pontiff, Gregory XVI, has always sanctioned our work such as it has been constituted.

It is superfluous to explain here the peremptory reasons which, from the beginning, have determined the establishment of that state of things.

Those reasons will be obvious to all attentive minds. But while the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Society, a few Conferences, recently established, have thought they needed to apologize, as it were, for having let in members of the Clergy. It was in that case for our brothers a mistake which their recent admission into the Society may excuse, but which

it is important to set right mmediately. The presence of a few members of the clergy in a lay Society does not change the character of that Society. If we go back to the source of the institutions of charity which, in all christian States, have honoured their country and comforted misfortune in all its forms, in all ages and in all conditions, we shall be obliged to own that those institutions have been founded by priests. And to-day as in the past centuries, it is right to proclaim that the poor *have been, are and will be always the children of the priests.* That is so true that it is proved by our language. It is said every day; we must send such a thing *to the poor of the parish priest,* or we must do this thing *for the poor of the parish priest.* It is consequently an understood thing that *parish priests have their poor.* And that seems so natural that it would be nearly a scandal *if they had not their poor.*

Such are facts we are noticing and all that speaks highly and unceasingly in praise of the Catholic Priests, to whom public conscience assigns and acknowledges a *perpetual family,* because it is incessantly renewed from all the most unfortunate people in the parish. And that those men who by their calling and feelings, have devoted their life to the relief of all miseries, should not have found, even in one Conference, the grateful welcome which is due to their charitable co-operation ! Such has never been the meaning of the prescriptions of the

rules and such is not the opinion of the Council-General which is entitled to interpret them.

But we have been repeatedly asked at different times what is the proper behaviour towards the Clergymen, who condescend to honour our meetings with their attendance.

The Council-General has deemed that the title of honorary member does not sufficiently express the respectful gratitude of a Conference towards the Clergymen, who should condescend to visit it at more or less distant intervals, or even to share in its labours. The much more dignified title of *member of honour* has alone seemed significant enough fully to express the relations of kindly condescension of the clergy and grateful veneration on our part. To invite them to sit among the officers of the Conference, and in a distinguished place, if possible; to submit the order of the day to their approbation; to ask of them a few words of edification and encouragement; to beg them especiallt not to withold from us their advice and counsels ; to listen with filial gratitude to their paternal exhortations; all these, and other things of the same kind are in perfect accordance with the lay character that is the essence of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. We need not say that, as the Bishops are *by right* the chiefs and fathers of all the institutions founded on Catholic charity, to them alone belongs the presidency, when they sometimes deign to assist at a meeting. On those grave and solemn occasions, a Prince of the Church,

when he enters a Conference, cannot descend to become one of us. If he comes down to our level, and holds out his hand to us, it is to do us the honour of raising us for a moment up to himself, and never really to become one of us. In many cities, the clergyman who are members of our Conferences, like to mingle with our ranks, and refuse to take a seat at the board; we should not, through our respect to those venerable men, become troublesome to them which might happen if, persisting to oppose their modesty, we wanted them to *ascend higher*. However we think it proper not to yield too easily, or without being as it were compelled to it by such a desire manifested by the head of a parish, or some priest occupying an eminent station. The natural place of a grand vicar or Parish priest is always by right marked in the *first rank* at any assembly over which rises the august sign of the Redemption. When that order, so proper *that it may be called necessary* is changed, every one must in consequence feel. uncomfortable. It is useless for the clergyman whose person and character we wished to honour, to try to disappear and get lost in the crowd; all eyes seek him, till, in spite of his humility, he at length allows us to observe the rules of propriety with respect to him.

That last observation and preceding advice are not however destined to lessen the right which the president has to manage the business of the meetings; that right remains unaltered,

save on the quite exceptional case of the presence of a bishop. The share of the presidency between two persons is really all nonsense and on the other hand the preservation of the spirit and of the custom of our Society requires that character of our Conferences be kept untouched. But that character would lose its actual evidence, if, in practice that chief point should be altered or modified.

God is our witness that all that we have just said, does not come from the suggestions of a vain and miserable pride.

On the contrary, charity alone makes us insist upon it. Since its foundation up to the present day, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, such as it is and such as our Holy Father the Pope has blessed it and has wished it to remain constituted, has had the daily and manifest gift of drawing on youth, of pleasing and improving it. Would it be prudent and wise to use the pruning-knife on a tree that bears fine fruit, in the hope, at least uncertain, of making it produce better ? Only wild stock can be grafted. The gardener respects and preserves the young wall trees, the fruit of which he is gathering every year.

Besides for all that concerns the relations of deference, there is an infallible rule which is implied in true humility, founded on the consciousness of our nothingness. If that feeling is united in our soul to a very high esteem and a deep respect for sacerdotal character and above all with a sincere love for the priest by

whom the mission of Jesus Christ is continued among us, it is and it will always be impossible for us to say or to do anything which may grieve our masters and our guides in the way of salvation.

Next to the strict observance of our rules and customs, nothing is more important than the choice of the President of the Conference. Long experience has shown that *what the President is, the Conference is also.* Saint Vincent de Paul sometimes said, that, if he were compelled to choose, for the success of an enterprise, between fifty stags headed by a lion, and fifty lions headed by a stag, he would feel more secure with the former than with the latter. That saying of a man who, in his lifetime deservedly enjoyed the reputation of consummate prudence, is a valuable lesson. In addition to the principal qualities that the President should possess, to be, like all his brethren, a worthy member of Saint Vincent de Paul, he must besides surpass all others in the deepest attachment to the Society, in a happy blending of mildness and firmness, in inexhaustible patience, and last of all in his ardent zeal for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the poor. It is not necessary for a President to be distinguished by brilliant qualities of mind, or even to be endowed with great fluency of speech. A President is sufficiently eloquent when he commands the attention of his hearers : and that will never fail him, if by the soundness of his judgment, he immediately points out the rea-

sonable things he has heard; if he quickly understands difficult cases, solves them without hesitating too long, and with mild but inflexible persistency maintains what has been resolved. An upright mind is a sure warrant of success for a President. With that he will always know how to confine himself within proper limits. When exposing to his brothers the necessities of the poor, he will feel what details ought to interest them and can reach their hearts; he will not carelessly wander from the subject; he will avoid dryness; he will not frown at the slightest sally of a younger brother, but nevertheless he will not allow eccentricities.

We doubtless all enjoy the happiness of being Christians by conviction, by heart and by practice; but nevertheless we are *men*. As such, our faults are so great, our virtues so trifling , and our humility so little, that it is not always, easy in an assembly to prevent or to stop the accidental outburst of a member, who is however excellent and deservedly respected for his piety. A man worthy of respect and actuated by the purest intentions, may, sometimes, through want of judiciousness, not perceive the unsoundness of certain of his propositions. A profound thinker has said : *We never do wrong more completely nor with a more contented heart than when we do it from a false principle of conscience.* Thence, comes that longing to speak, at every turn, of subjects foreign to the Conference; thence arise

those contests of words of which it is very difficult to prevent some strokes from wounding even charity itself. It is on such occasions and others of the same kind, that the duty of the President often becomes laborious. That he should bear mildly the first deviations from order is easily understood; but he must not let them increase, or above all recur. With due respect for the valuable qualities of a brother, often full of zeal and candour, he must resist any efforts that might be tried to convert the friendly conversation of our Conference into angry debates and personal quarrels.

This ancient motto of the Christians : *cor unum et anima una*, invites me to say a few words on a subject yet untouched, and however of great importance. In the primitive Church, the faithful always commended themselves to the prayers of one another : their letters began and ended with formulas that had become usual and were never omitted. Even in the time of Saint Vincent de Paul, as all his letters show, business was entered upon only after wishing one's correspondent for ever *the love, grace and peace of Jesus Christ*. In our days, these formulas have disappeared, and are hardly used but in the letters of persons engaged in monastic life. Yet the feeling, which had inspired those greetings equally touching in their sense and their form, still lives in our hearts and nothing is more common in christian families than a mutual demand not forget one another at prayer-time. Such demands are never rejected,

though we frequently blush when they are addressed to us, for we know how little able we are to invoke God with efficacy for others, when we are so slow to pray for ourselves. But are those express or tacit promises of prayers always kept? Alas! No : we must candidly confess that in most cases we forget them. However, such reciprocity of kind services before God would be a new tie between us, and moreover a truly valuable advantage for every one. We see, from the correspondence of nearly all the Conferences, that our brothers frequently commend themselves to the prayers of the Council-General, and to those of the Council of Paris. In cases of death, illness and a few particular necessities, individual requests are sent to the same purpose; but we receive collective entreaties whenever a Conference undertakes a new work, when it wishes to draw the blessings of Heaven upon the instruction it gives or causes to be given to youths or children, when it hopes for some favourable event or wishes to avert a misfortune. On those and similar occasions, prayers are asked of us. And we too, the elder brothers of the family, should have many reasons to solicit the prayers of our brothers divided from us not by feeling but distance. In order to answer the pious feeling which multiplies such solicitations, and makes us feel the necessity of being ourselves constantly recommended to God, we have thought useful to make known to you the initiation of a prayer already an-

cient, that a holy prelate had composed for his own use and that of his friends (1). This prayer, appropriated to the wants of our Society, to those of our poor, approved, by ecclesiastical authority, and adopted by several of our brothers in Paris, has seemed to us suited to the desired object. I enclose a few copies of it. It must be understood that the recitation of that prayer is obligatory upon no one, and the omission of it will be no fault; all that we wish is to supply a real want and thus satisfy the piety fo many of our brothers. However, if we feel inclined and if the prayer touches us, each of us may copy it for himself, and say it fervently every day, either at church, or in his usual devotions, or at any other time; and then we may go to sleep with the sweet and consoling thought, that in all the parts of the world there is not one of our Conferences, not one of their good works, nor one of our brothers for whom we have not invoked Heaven.

Believe me, etc.,

JULES GOSSIN.

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(1) It is to the zeal of M. Gossin, wrote his successor in a circular to the Conferences of 14th April 1848, « that we owe the Manual, to his piety we are indebted for the Prayer for the use of members of the Society. »

Paris, November 1 st, 1847.
All Saints' Day.

Sirs and dear Brothers,

The Council-General, to which I had the honour of announcing, as early as last April, that my health would soon compel me to resign the title and office of President of the Society, has now received my formal resignation. Before my successor is chosen, I yield to the desire of the Council and to my own inclination, by not denying myself the pleasure of conversing once more with you.

A sort of solemnity seems to belong to a voice that is no more to be heard. The words of a dying man, those of a father who undertakes a voyage from which he does not hope to return, even those of a brother about to leave for an indefinite term, have then unaccustomed weight, as if those words, that are not to be repeated, ought ever to be present in the ears, minds and hearts of all the members of the family.

Far from rejecting that accidental claim to more complete attention, Sirs and dear Brothers, I dare on the contrary avail myself of it, in order that my effusions may bear all the fruits we should expect for the preservation of the spirit of our Society, the confirmation of its usages, and the consecration, if we may say so, of the maxims, which, after constituting its force up to this day, will secure its duration. For the sake of brevity and conciseness, I shall

neglect transitions, and limit myself to stating certain remarks that are, for the Council-General and myself, positive truths confirmed by observation and experience.

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in general, — The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, viewed in its true light, is one of the means employed by divine Providence,as well to give the poor assistance both spiritual and temporal, as to revive *in all places and times* the spirit of religion and harmony. The latter end the Society endeavours to attain, by opposing human respect, and dispelling between men of faith and virtue prejudices, and antipathies of all kinds, especially those that arise from politics, in order to make them one and same family, marching together to the conquest of heaven by good works, under the double banner of the cross and Catholic charity.

A Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul is every-where a benefit to the public.

It is a benefit for the poor, but a still greater one for those who, without being distressed by poverty, were, formerly and before joining our ranks, a prey to many other miseries, such as loneliness, idleness, human respect, a surfeit of all false pleasures and even the loathing of life.

Wherever the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul exists, true catholics, friends of the poor, may meet on a ground of sacred neutrality, *that of charity*. They are then recalled to the only true happiness of this world, the daily practice of what is right,

with a view to an eternal reward; and, by constantly and altogether aiming at the same object, they may show themselves as believers, followers of religion and charitable men, without being, for any of those reasons, accused of singularity.

The first qualification therefore that a candidate should possess, when he wishes to enter a Conference, is an eager desire for the prosperity of the Society, certainly not out of pride, but from a feeling of deep gratitude to God who has raised up in our time this means, till then unknown or not in use, of assisting the poor, and at the same time improving those who visit them.

To unite our slender alms in favour of the poor so that the number of the offerings should make up for the smallness of each of them; to unite our hearts prayers and works in order to encourage each other in the path of virtue by the powerful influence of good example, such are, in a word, the whole secret and the whole spirit of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

We should never separate those two ends *They are essentially connected in the Society and cannot bear to be detached from one another.* To do good *separately* is to practice almsgiving, but that is not the work of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. To form a connection with persons worthy of esteem in every respect, but who do not intend to make their mutual relations serve as the foundation of a Society of good works, *that are to be dis-*

cussed and performed together and at common expense; that is doubtless doing a thing good in itself : but it is not forming that alliance of a quite peculiar nature, of which any member that has been some time in the Society does so fully appreciate the usefulness, know the charm, and so cheerfully adopt the usages.

The copper, silver and gold offered by each, according to his circumstances, and mixed in the common purse, support the treasure ever exhausted and ever renewed with which we assist the poor. For the word *mixing* substitute *allying*, which expresses both intelligence and will and you will have a slight image of the cordial concert and blending of our brothers to perform charitable deeds together, whatever differences may exist between their wordly circumstances, éducation and fortune.

The Conferences whose members should exclusively attent to the care of the poor, without attempting to create and foster among themselves any relations of kindness and affection, would therefore lose sight of one of their essential objects; and, on the other side, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul could not recognize itself in an assembly, however honourable its elements, if it did not meet for the relief of the temporal and spiritual miseries of the poor, by means of free and secret alms, collected at the same time, joined together, and to be used by each visitor according to the greater or less number of families under his charge.

Such are the infaillible signs to which the Conferences may refer, in order to judge if they have really kept, to this day, within the essential spirit and fundamental usages of the Society.

The Society trusts in the often experienced protection of Providence. It does not hoard up money; it gives according to its means; it likes to turn everything to account; it renews what is old; it finds some use for what seems to be past using. It does not sweep the crumbs away, but saves them : were it to relieve only a child with those crumbs, they would be precious to it.

The proper character of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, is not to seek solutions for several great problems, which relate to the very existence of social order, and do, in our days, occupy the most eminent minds; its office is the practice of charity, which is very far from excluding the research of the material and moral means of rendering the condition of the poor more tolerable : How many ingenious things have already been invented by our brothers ! The Holy Family, the Savings Bank, the Rent Fund, the books lent out, the patronage of apprentices and school-boys, etc., etc.

Notwithstanding all the pledges that seem to secure its duration, the Society seems, however to be exposed to two perils that threaten its existence.

It may be feared that, instead of continuing to be a Society essentially religious and exclu-

sively catholic, it might, in the future, dwindle into a vast Charity-Board, restricting its solicitude to the dealing out of material relief.

It may also be feared that the uniformity of our meetings should produce monotony, weariness and at last cause the Conferences to be deserted.

To guard the Society from the former peril, we have two infallible means.

The first is to introduce into the Society none but catholics capable of edifying their brothers; that is who, far from allowing religion no other homage than that of cold respect, conform their lives to all the precepts of Jesus Christ and His Church; the second is to love, from the very bottom of our hearts, our fathers and masters in faith, I mean the Episcopacy and the clergy.

For that I refer you to the Circular of the 30th of May, 1846. As for the latter peril, the only means of avoiding it is never to leave off the daily and assiduous practice of visiting the poor in their homes.

Any Conference that faithfully adheres to that first of our practices will know neither monotony nor weariness.

All those Conferences which neglect it, or follow it but imperfectly, will die of consumption. Wherefore ? Because it is natural that individuals, in the presence of one another, should grow weary and tired of each other; external causes, such as the frequent account of the wants of poor families, and the measures

to be resorted to, are required to give life, interest and animation to our meetings...

In the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, there is little inclination, to write, and hardly any to read. For what concerns the first point, the Council-General scarcely hears once a year from many Conferences, which however would have things of interest to communicate. As for the second, the members deprive themselves of useful and even necessary instructions relative to the organization of the Society, and thus are acquainted neither with the solutions of certain questions, nor with the history and works of the other Conferences.

It is desirable that the various publications, in which the history and progress of the Society are faithfully related, should become familiar to every member.

Conferences.. — Most of the Conferences, thanks to God, are free both from sadness and constraint. On the contrary, cheerfulness is not excluded from among them, where gentle and amicable cordiality generally prevails.

But a few Conferences are mentioned, into which that disposition is not admitted, and where constraint, coldness and sometimes even weariness prevail.

No Conference, however, has offended against propriety or charity, because laughter has been allowed among its members. Sometimes even laughter is excellent; it revives attention, prevents sleep, excites cordiality and appeases too violent discussions. It is the best sign of

that spirit of decent freedom that should rule among us, and which acts at the same time as a tie, a pleasure and most potent charm.

The Conferences that afford the most plentiful relief to the poor, are those in which charity is practised cheerfully...

It would no doubt be improper to go to a Conference in hopes of finding or provoking occasions of hilarity. We must, on the contrary, consider attendance at the Conference as a *serious duty*. But it is no contradiction to consider a Charitable Society *quite seriously*, and at the same time to yield to the free and communicative gaiety that pervades it at certain times.

In France ,what even the best men fear most, is weariness and, in that respect, the men of every country are all *more or less French*.

Weariness is to a Conference what smoke is to a bee-hive.

When it happens that a swarm of bees does not thrive ,it is not because the bees get tired of work, it is because they are too much disturbed by lookers on, who want to find out, at any cost, the secret of their honey and their wax as well as what concerns the internal administration of their little harmless community.

The same thing happens to the Conferences of our Society, when the public choose to bestow upon them too much attention.

Assuredly, we may be quite worthy of esteem, — charitable, christian, fervent and laborious, without belonging to our Society; but, when a young man who possessed of those qualities has

been admitted into our Conferences and has afterwards deserted them, his prolonged absence is a most sad indication. Hasten then, zealous Presidents, to give up every other affair, and go and visit those young brothers : they are in danger : the clock that kept time with such regularity is surely out of order. Examine well; ask questions with the gentle solicitude that belongs to a father's heart; you may perhaps prevent a great fall, or arrive still in time to redeem it. In the moral as in the material world, some things attract and some things repel each other mutually; those symptoms cannot deceive. When therefore charity that attracted repels, *it must be that the soul which loved God and the poor has taken to some other love.*

In the Conferences where there are many young men newly arrived from the provinces, it would be well that the President should choose two or three members to enter into immediate relation with our young brothers, and give them desirable information on many things which it is important that they should know. Thus, they would be saved from isolation, and helped to find some young men in whom they will meet with that friendship, *prepared beforehand*, and if I may say so, *ready-made* which is one of the means intended by Providence to become the confort of their studious hours, the joy of their leisure time, and the support of their steps, perhaps yet insecure, in the path of virtue. Nothing more than shyness causes us to live

apart from the rest, and young men are nearly all timid. This should never be forgotten.

Large trees often spring from a fruit that a bird has dropped. The presence of a single, but zealous, member is sometimes enough to raise in a city a religioux institution, charitable, social and therefore eminently useful.

Whenever one of our brothers leaves his Conference to settle in a town of some importance where the Society is unknown, it would be well that he should, when once settled, inform his new parish priest that a member of our Society is there, waiting till it pleases Providence to send him a brother. Should one or two new comers likewise give notice to the same Pastor, a new Conference is soon formed in a city which, but for so simple a means of recognition between brothers would long have remained unacquainted with the Society.

As is the President, so also is the Conference.

We do not always know whom we ought to choose as members of the Board : but we can at least know infallibly what candidates we ought not to choose : it is those who evince eagerness to be called to office.

A Conference is lost when, as is unfortunately not unexampled, any systematic opposition is formed against the President's authority.

Then, the members of Conferences cease to edify one another; on the contrary they become a mutual cause of scandal; — then, the

cares of petty vanity absorb the time destined to speak of the necessities of the poor and to provide for them. Both sides depart with dry and wounded feelings. Then indeed, let us repeat it, the Conference is really no more; how, indeed, could Saint Vincent de Paul recognise his children in an assembly from which his banner, that of charity, has long ago disappeared?

Visits to the poor. — When we leave off visiting the poor, we forget them, and with them charity.

When we often visit the poor, we prefer the poor to all the rest, and to ourselves. When we are long without seeing them, we prefer anything to the poor.

That member of Saint Vincent de Paul who considers himself only as a bearer of bread to a poor family, understands neither charity, nor the Society, nor the poor. The Society has never been, and never will be, an association of porters.

Sending bread-tickets through a servant is keeping back, to the detriment of the poor, the better part of the alms due to them. I mean what a good word from the heart would have added to that bread.

What moves a poor man from the very bottom of his heart, is to see that you think of him, look after him and love him : it is to feel that the visitor gives himself or at least *lends himself to him* once a week.

Charity is efficient only when complete, and it is complete only when it is *true*.

All the faculties of a truly charitable man concur in the act of almsgiving. When the hands have made their offering, comes the turn of the other limbs, etc. The mouth ministers words of comfort and hope; the feet become those of the lame man, and the arms those of the paralytic. But of all the consolations which we can afford the poor, the greatest and most rare is that given by our ear, when we listen to them,

Meekness and patience in our relations with the poor are the first virtues we should endeavour to acquire. Without them, there is no charity. That we should not always be able to give, a poor man conceives and excuses; but that we should address him harshly, he can neither bear, forget nor forgive. We may sometimes happen to assume a loud tone, when excited by the very interest we bear to a poor person, or to scold him for doing something wrong or foolish. This is always wrong. The poor man is offended, and the salutary influence we might hope to have over him, is then lost or much endangered.

It has been said and still is proved by daily experience, that sending poor families to Paris, solely from the hope that there they will obtain employment and resources more easily than elsewhere, is merely bringing the greatest calamity upon them, an evil without any remedy.

For the little we give to the poor, how many elements of happiness the poor send us in return!

Whole volumes night be written on that subject.

How many hours are lost in life ! How happy the poor would be if we thought of disposing of those in their favour, by a few supererogatory visits ! There are many families, especially in large towns, which are relieved only by our brothers, known only by them, and living in absolute isolation. How eager therefore is their expectation, in the garret where then dwell, for the usual weekly visit ! They dare not go out lest they should lose it; if a step is heard on the stairs, as narrow and steep as a ladder, that lead to those abodes of misery, their hearts beat with hope. If that hope is deceived *well*, the say sadly, *it will then be for to-morrow.*

A spirit of order and foresight is seldom found among the poor. Yet, in whatever destitution a family may be, it would be possible, by intelligence, perseverance and industry, to render its situation less painful. That is principally the visitor's office; he must give to the poor his judgment, meditations and experience. As he is the eye of the blind man and the foot of the lame, he must be the reason of the fool and the steward of the prodigal; for some poor are prodigal. How truly does apply the profound saying of David's: « *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pouperem.* »

Of all the works of the Society, that which does most deeply move the hearts of the poor, is the one called the Work of the Holy Family,

the object of which is to bring together, before the altars, the visited and visitors worshipping the same mysteries, hearing the same instructions and praying for each other. Everywhere, except in churches, the different ranks have their places assigned to them. Here, the poor and the rich are mingled, praying for one another. No work, we say it again, pleases the poor more, none raises them more in their own eyes, none produces more abundant and enduroble fruits of salvation. That work is really one of *progress* and of the best kind of progress.

Great pain is inseparably connected with our visiting the homes of the poor; I mean the difficulty of establishing any proportion, however distant, between the wants and the assistance. One means however is suggested of diminishing that pain : *settle on your poor families at least a portion of your superfluous expenses.*

Certain habits indifferent in themselves, but which at last become very expensive, have gradually been introduced among nearly all modern nations, and the young men have adopted them with all the ardour of their age. I here allude to the pipe, cigar and snuff--box. Convinced that those habits, *if they could at least be progressively reduced to moderate use*, would afford the means of supporting many families, our Society would rejoice, if the courageous reform of what is *exaggerated* in those habits were to change into bread, even a part of the

daily and ruinous tribute which several of us pay to those tastes.

We often lament the inconveniences arising from those habits: all resolves of moderation yield to their force considered as irresistible, especially when they have long prevailed. Well, let us resolve to buy bread every day with what we save on those expenses equally sterile and tyrannical, and soon we shall be both surprised and delighted at enjoying better health, and having supported some poor person.

Such are, Sirs and dear Brothers, the last counsels which I beg leave to commit to your meditations, before I resume among you the place which I occupied in 1844. The Council-General has deemed that, although these things were not new, it was highly profitable to remind you of them even with a sort of earnestness and solemnity, because they constitute in reality the fundamental and primitive spirit of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

One word more, and I have done.

During the years that I have had the honour of being at your head, I have been in direct relation with a great number of our brothers, and I have reason to fear that I have often edified them very little. I can therefore do nothing better when taking leave of you, than to use the remarkable words addressed to his flock by a Bishop of the Primitive Church, on the anniversary day of his promotion :

« I am too far from vain confidence in myself to presume to say that I have offended none

in ,the discharge of my office. If therefore in the various affairs and anxieties with which I have been overwhelmed, I have chanced not to listen to one of you as he wished; if I have looked upon one of you more severely than I ought, or addressed him some word louder than was necessary; if I have hurt by some improper answer the afflicted or those in humble circumstances; if either perchance, or absorbed in thought, I have neglected the prayer of some poor man, or put him off till another time, or repelled him with a haughty gesture, if I have shown too great vivacity in clearing myself of an unjust suspicion; if one of you, in his conscience, could doubt my feelings to-wards him : all of you to whom I am answerable for these offences, forgive me that you may be forgiven. »

Believe me, etc.

JULES GOSSIN.

Paris, 14th April, 1848.

Sir and dear Brother,

If we consider attentively the situation of Charitable Societies in general, and particularly of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, we shall easily see that three fundamental virtues are required of them, more strictly than ever in these days; charity to the poor, union or confarternity between their members, and christian

prudence. These are the three principal links that give the chain its solidity, and allow it to be stretched without losing any of its strength.

First, charity to the poor! That is the first of our duties, as well as the sweetest of our satisfactions, the condition and reason of our existence, the aliment of our zeal, the justification of our whole life! *Principium et finis, alpha et omega!* Through it we received life, fifteen years ago, through it we shall continue to grow and prosper; so long as it lives among us, so long as it animates our steps, undertakings and endeavours, obstacles will fall of themselves; and if, in ordinary times, it is our vital element, how much more ought it not to be so in our days? In fact, all invites us to be doubly tender to the poor : their interest, our own, and that of our country!

Everything does, therefore, make it our duty more than ever to devote ourselves to the service of the poor ,and not to desert our Conferences for other meetings assuredly useful, but in which that great and vital interest is not so thoroughly engaged. To observe such punctuality may demand greater efforts and sacrifices; but the gratitude of the families we relieve will be our reward. We may not always have in our hands the same material resources to distribute; but we shall always have the same heart, affection and tenderness, or rather our heart will be more compassionate, our affection more lively, our tenderness more attentive; and whosoever has lived long among our families,

will not doubt that, for many, the insignificance of our gifts will be more than supplied by that increase of love and benevolence. Let us therefore trust and persevere ! Trust not in ourselves but in God; persevere, because, if God never forsakes those who rely upon him, it is on condition they will assist themselves and not shrink from sacrifice.

Charity, Sir and dear Brother, is therefore the first virtue under whose shade we must seek shelter. But to that fundamental duty others are added, amongst which are the duty of confraternity, the duty of prudence.

The duty of brotherhood, we doubtless have all long felt and practiced; for what, from the very origin, has made the harmless strength and vitality of our Conferences, is the genuine cordiality that has always prevailed among their members, the simplicity of their meetings, the effusions of friendship, and what I might here presume to term the pious fellowship of charity. This is what has filled our Conferences, and called to them at the same time as young men, others of greater maturity and more settled position in life ; this has brought together, side by side, persons of the most various situations, opinions and fortunes ; this has made them at last overcome the weakness of their first attempts and scantiness of their resources. But, if cordial affection has been the principle of our development, it is to be the secret of our continuance and, at a time whem the world is shaken in the name of that tutelary principle, we

can never be too often reminded of it. Therefore, in order never to forget the basis of our Society, the conditions of our existence, the guarantee of our future success, we shall presume to recommend to all our brothers, the meditation of the numerous passages in the general Rule, the Circulars and the Manual, in which those considerations are developed; we shall presume to beg the President of every Conference, when admitting new members, to insist upon it, so as to make them appreciate and love that fundamental character of the Society which they are entering. For that reason, we can never too earnestly exhort them to avoid whatever might even slightly injure that christian friendship, to banish all irritating discussions, to avert those started by vanity : on that our existence and progress depend.

But, as the Rule, says, affection between the different members is not enough; it must likewise exist between different Conferences, different cities, different countries.. Thanks to God, that love is strong and sincere; and the members of the Society who, in travelling, visit other Conferences, are welcomed with a joy that astonishes and a kindness that delights them. But if I were allowed, Sir and dear Brother, here to express a wish, it is that those relations should be less personal and consequently more frequent. No doubt, when a brother from abroad arrives among us, he is welcomed with joy and as a member of the family; no doubt, the Conferences correspond

with the Council-General, and through that common medium, are mutually informed of whatever occurs of importance among them. But, on the one hand, those communications are often fugitive, and the letters exchanged at distant intervals of time, give but insufficient details; and, on the other, is it not but too true that the Conferences do not sufficiently avail themselves of their proximity to one another, that they are too often ignorant of what is going on in the neighbourhood, and hear of it only through the accounts of the general meetings in Paris, or the annual publication of the General Report? What good might, however, result from more frequent intercourse? Very often a Conference, in the first days of its existence, has few members and slender resources, and stands in need of frequent advice for the practice of charity. Very often too, some good works, to be efficient and acquire useful extension, must be undertaken in common. In one place, it might be the recommendation of the apprentices going from one city to another to complete their apprenticeship; in another, information to be collected for a poor man about to set out on a journey; elsewhere, libraries to be founded, and whose value would be multiplied in a five or tenfold proportion, if volumes were from time to time exchanged with the different Conferences of the vicinity; everywhere, in short, zeal would spread by the sole fact of the relations entered upon, the interest of the weekly meetings would increase, the general meeting

of each Conference would become more full and animated; and I am not afraid of being mistaken when I affirm that if as is practiced in a few localities, all the neighbouring Conferences kept up among themselves such daily and practical intercourse, this would in nowise diminish the relations with the more distant Conferences and the Council-General; if they had a centre of correspondence among themselves, a new impulse would be given to charity in our Conferences. In families even the most closely united, when their members cease to visit mutually and to write frequently to each other; when, for the preservation of the ties of affection, they rely on the remembrances of childhood, the feelings of relationship and common principles; those remembrances, feelings and principles, are, more or less rapidly, more or less completely, obliterated; but, they are still most certainly altered. In our vast family, in which we reckon so many scattered members whom we shall perhaps never see, let those at least, who can see each other and shake hands together, avail themselves frequently of that privilege.

I have, in the third place, mentioned christian prudence. I shall not enter upon detailed rules; they are infinitely varied, according to circumstances, places and persons. Any Conference animated with the true spirit of the Society, must be the best judge of their application : I shall only insist upon a few fundamental points, which you will, Sir and dear

Brother, excuse my enumerating, as they concern all of us.

It seems to me that, in the present times, it is highly important for us never to forget that we are a Society of practical charity, and not one of speculative, and theoretical charity, — a Society that seeks to recall souls to God by the sweet effusion of christian benevolence, and not a Society that discusses, struggles and courts public notice. Undoubtedly, the latter associations have their importance. Would not charity, without the light of study, soon cease to exist and become mere routine? Without christian polemics, which are also one of its branches, as was so eloquently said in one of our General meetings by one of the most illustrisous interpreters of the Gospel, would not charity, thus mulilated, be incomplete? But every Society has its duties as well as its mission. Those among us, who have leisure and inclination, may mingle with those Societies in their own name; they may appear on the more brilliant stage of publicity, persuade and enlighten others by discussion. Let us avail ourselves of their labours and learning but let us not engage our Conferences in those struggles always too ardent : let us not join, *even as mere members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul*, those public manifestations that will lose nothing of their efficacy and splendour, ,though not supported by the name of our Conferences, and where our action will be the more free as it is

the more personal. This wish will, I hope, be listened to and appreciated by all.

This brings me, Sir and dear Brother, to some reflections to which the Council and several Conferences have wished to call the attention of us all. A tendency has of late been manifested in the Society which is not yet a danger, but which should nevertheless be stopped from the very outset. A few members, in their love for the Society, have thought it good, no doubt in order to make it better known, to assume in public the title of Members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, even when their relations with the public had not the Society for their object. Such a precedent, if renewed, woud be liable to great objecion.

Moreover, we are not members of St. Vincent Paul, in the performance of all the duties of our life, when we found any institution unconnected with the Society; still less *when engaged in our private affairs*, when transacting public business, each according to our situation.

As a general rule therefore, we must assume that title only when performing what the Conference, to which we belong, enjoins upon us; justice and prudence equally require it.

I now come to some minor details of less importance, and of various nature, but which however I will not put off till my next letter.

I have mentioned above with gratification the habit of some our brothers, who, when travelling, visit the Conferences of the cities through which

they pass. Here again a few abuses, luckily of rare occurrence, heve crept in; persons who formerly had belonged to some Conference, and had been obliged to withdraw, have used that title, and even in some cases, certificates which had been delivered to them, to present themselves to other Conferences, and make the members of them participate in fictitious good deeds for their own benefit. Those abuses are not frequent, I say it again : but it is enough that they have existed, to make us be on our guard against facts that might if renewed, destroy salutary confidence between the members of the Society, and make it impossible for them to visit the Conferences to which they do not belong. To put an end to that evil, the Council--General has decided, first, that the Secretary-General of the Society should never deliver any *certificate attesting that a person has belonged to the Society;* and that any member wishing to visit a provincial Conference, shall receive a special letter for the President of that Conference (1). Second, that all the Conferences shall be invited to adopt a similar rule. With such easy precautions, it is believed that no further abuse can take place, and the Council trusts that those measures,, adopted by

(1) In order to avoid the inconvenience which this method of procedure might entail, it has become the custom to directly recommend the brothers. (See article 18, explanatory paragraph 4.)

all, will meet with complete adhesion and watchful execution.

Believe me, etc.,

AD. BAUDON.

Paris, November 1st, 1849,
All Saints' day.

Sir and dear Brother,

Zeal is the whole life of Christian works. Without, the richest ones are unable to do good and have but an ephemeral prosperity. With it, they stand all trials; they are never discouraged before obstacles nor disheartened and weary ; with it, they are poor without being powerless, few in number without being inactive, overburdened with labour without being owerwhelmed, because they are unceasingly drawing from themselves countless wealth, fecundity and vigour.

You may really apply to them that word of Scripture : *Dabo tibi thesauros absconditos.*

But is our zeal great enough? Is it so great as it was a few years ago? Has it not been weakened in some of us in the midst of all the turmoil of the world which we have passed through ? It is a serious question, which every one of us has to answer for himself.

I only intend to examine it in general.

In the last eighteen months we have often met people who were formerly filled with the greatest zeal for the poor and who at the present moment stand aloof, come but irregularly to the meetings or attend them absently without taking any interest in them « General matters of anxiety are so grave, they say, peace and tranquillity are so unsettled from one end of the world to the other, that it is imposible to keep sufficiently one's presence of mind and occupy one's self with such trifles as the granting of relief tickets or the gift of a few clothes. » It is a deplorable error against which we can never make too strong a stand ! Wat ! I should say to those brothers, you are Chri tian, you are rightly proud of being so, you try to conform your private life to the divine precepts of the Gospel and you do not see that all these perturbations, all these wars,, all these plagues that seem as if they would swallw up the present generation, are only caused by forgetfulness of God !

You do not admit that everything has perished because some people want to banish God from everything, and you are convinced that everything will only be restored on letting God enter again into our conscience and our public and private habits! You are consequently convinced that, if we do not apply ourselves to restore whole christian life, a part of which charity evidently is, it is vain that we should act and try to improve and build up again.

There are however some of them who are insistent, and allege other duties, more urgent in the actual state of things than at any other time, namely, political duties. I am far, Sir and dear Brother, from wishing to dissuade anybody from doing his duty; for every one of them is sacred, and the graver their end is, the more time they deserve that we devote to them. Above all I am far from wishing to give you here any advice whatever in such matters! For it has always been said, repeated and published amongst us that political matters should be banished from our charitable meetings, that we should not inquire about the opinions of each other on that subject, convinced as we are that those opinions are dictated by conscience and ruled by christian moderation; and if such a wise rule has been laid down, it would be now the right moment to establish it in the interest of our union and our good harmony. But we must acknowledge that those duties, however important they are, do not take so much of our time as to prevent us from giving a part of it to our Conference and to our poor. If we want to devote ourselves to the unfortunate, we may still do so and we have only to want it steadily. Besides do not those duties, in proportion to their importance, make it absolutely necessary to the soul to rest from time to time? On the unsettled ground of human things, the most upright hearts may not agree together, their feelings may be wounded, they may become irritated. On charitable

ground, on the contrary, those who are the most separated from each other in other respects, ought to understand and to love one another, if they are christians

The more difficult the times are, the more we have, Sir and dear Brother, to develop in ourselves the spirit of zeal and charity. The enemies to truth and faith, the Children of Darkness, as the Gospel says, give us here remarkable examples and perhaps we shall one day deplore before God, not having followed them. While we are hesitating, they are working, while we are keeping silence, they are speaking; while we are sparing ourselves trouble and fatigue, they are toiling hard. Let us also follow for the sake of God and in the interest of the poor commited to our care those profitable lessons, or rather let us not pass near the good without noticing it. Let us imitate, in our respective sphere of action and in behalf of the various interest we are intrusted with, the courageous and generous men who are dishearened neither by danger nor by epidemics, and who are renewing their endeavours to face calamities before which most men feel weak and discouraged. Let us above all take pattern from the Saints who lived before us and who, like us, and still more, have had obstacles to overcome, and specially from Saint Vincent de Paul, our well beloved patron, that model and that hero of christian zeal...

I am coming now, without any transition, to

the *general duties which at all times have concerned all the Conferences.*

Allow me, with due friendship, but also with complete freedom to call your attention to the points in which our zeal seems to fail.

The first that strikes me is the want of regular attendance at the meetings of certain Conferences. In some localities, there is a complaint of lack of zeal; members come late and leave early, or very often do not come at all : consequently the punctual members are discouraged, the less zealous absent themselves, and the collections are greatly diminished. The evil should be immediately remedied, and therefore I appeal to the charity of *all* our brothers, to the love they bear the Society, their Conferences, their poor. I apply first to the Presidents, who have, here as everywhere, a great task to accomplish, and beseech them, in order to find a remedy for that *absenteeism*, to make it the constant subject of their thoughts, frequently to speak of it with the members, to have recourse to personal influence and exhortations, so powerful when springing from charity. But, if the Presidents ought to show the way and set the example, all the rest ought eagerly to follow it ; I therefore appeal to every one of our brothers, and beg they will themselves remedy that evil, so easily cured. Let them consider how sad and wearisome is an incomplete meeting, that drags on slowly because part of the members arrive only when others have already left; how discouraging for the zealous,

how detrimental to Works, how injurious to the poor ! When we form a charitable Society, it is to meet one another, to encourage one another mutually by our presence, and not to stay away.

Our meetings I am told, are monotonous, and dwell on the same facts. Allow me to enquire whether it is not your own fault, if such is the case. Where a member finds among his poor some honourable act to mention, when he is so happy as to recall one of them to more christian-like behaviour, or reclaim him from destitution, if he did not keep to himself that element of edification, if he related it with simplicity and without glorying in it, do not we believe that monotony would be dispelled? If, at stated periods, we were to review the moral and material condition of our families, do we not ride that the part of the meeting devoted to that investigation would throw real interest upon the rest? We feel only for those whom we know, and we should know the Conferences better. Would it not be the same, if in the interval betwen those quarterly or semi-annual reviews of the families, we were to present to the Conference detailed reports, with precise and technical facts concerning the children in our schools, the clothing department, the rent-fund, the patronized apprentices, the library and all accessory Works? Each of these, taken separately, is not much; but, by degrees, we should get better acquainted with the whole of our work in which we too often see but *the*

poor of whom we have charge; we should like and cherish it; yet still I have not gone beyond the circle of the Conference, I have spoken only of the elements of edification it may draw from itself? But, if we consider that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul does not extend to a single parish, only, but to nearly all the dioceses of France, and over many countries in Europe : that its pacific banner is planted in Africa, Asia and America, and that its charitable conquests are daily spreading in those distant regions; that, notwithstanding the distance between them, those Conferences are in the same spirit, under the same Rules; that their correspondences are, in their most instructive and attaching points, submitted in reports to the Conferences every other month; that besides, private corespondence is constantly going on between the different parts of this immense whole : what an inexhaustible fund of life, movement, initiative, imitation and zeal have we not there? We sometimes find there is nothing to do at the meeting, no object in it : for my own part, I only wonder at one thing : it not lasting longer, and, whenever we part, our not regretting to have left behind some good to do, some charitable thought to exchange.

If it is of importance for us to meet every week in order to perform the practical duties of charity, it is no less so to keep up the general meetings, provided for by the Rules, and in which, four times a year, the members active and honorary, after praying before the sacred

altars, meet under the presidency of venerable clergymen, even often round the chief Pastors of the diocese, to sum up their labours for the charitable public. In the cities that contain several Conferences, the usefulness of those periodical meetings is self-evident; for, as we have stated many a time, they prevent the multiplicity of Conferences from becoming the cause of disorder isolation and separation; they unite the brothers who have become too numerous to be together in one Conference, and to those who possess the spirit of the Society, they procure the greatest satisfaction, I mean that enjoyed in the midst of a numerous and affectionate family. *Quam bonus est fratres habitare in unum !* (1) we then exclaim. What new ardour we draw from it! What a holy emulation of the Conferences among themselves!

But those periodical meetings which generally bear within themselves their own justification in the large cities that possess many Conferences, have a tendency to be abandoned in single Conferences. What should we have to do, they say? What should we have to say to our subscribers, our honorary members, to the clergymen that would take trouble of attending our meetings? Would it not be wasting their time and pains, and is not a single annual meeting enough for the modest sphere of our action.

I cannot too strongly contradict that opinion,

(1) P. S. : 132.

Sir and dear Brother. First of all, it is evidently in opposition to the Rule of our Society to the Brief granted by His Holiness, Pope Gregory XVI, of glorious memory, conceding valuable indulgences to the members, who, after Mass and Communion, attend the General Meetings.

Moreover, if the custom of the four Meetings a year is abandoned, shall we not fear that the hearing of Mass on the festivals of the Society, may thereby be also left off; that we may thus deprive ouselves of the graces attached to prayer in common : that the honorary members, too long separated from the Society may at last forget it, and that in the general remissness, the zeal of the active members themselves may slacken? For those meetings a Report must be made, and therefore a study of the labours of the Conference, a recurrence to the past. If little has been done, the members see it , not to grow discouraged thereby, but to feel humble and form more generous resolves. If much has been accomplished, the more intimate conviction gained by it adds to the activity, and gives it a new impulse. Even the petty cares of the preparations to be made, the very details of organization have their usefulness. We never enjoy things but in proportion to the labour they cost, and the obstacles to be overcome; and a Society that has none of those periodical excitements, languishes for that very reason .

We must therefore strongly adhere to the

custom of general meetings, such as they are provided for by the Rule, even in isolated and thinly attended Conferences. But if we wish to render those meetings more efficient by making them more attractive, the example of a few Conferences affords us infallible means for that purpose, which I can confidently point out. Instead of always holding the general meetings in their own town, those Conferences agree with those of the neighbouring towns, to meet sometimes in the chief city of the diocese or ecclesiastical province; at other times elsewhere, by turns. All the Conferences in the neighbourhood are then convoked to the appointed place; there each makes its report, reviews the special works it has adopted; there new plans are communicated, bases are laid for new Works to be undertaken in common, the ties of intimacy are made closer, and all leave those meetings of charity with greater fervour and more devoted love for the poor. Let all the Conferences in the same ecclesiastical circumscription follow that example, let them agree to hold in *common* at least two of the four general meetings; let them, according to local requirements, appoint the most convenient meeting place, and the interest inherent to those family festivities will soon settle them for ever among our usages.

A third point which it is of importance not to neglect, is the zeal to attract new members to the Conferences. It has been said several times among us, but cannot be repeated too

often : « If abandoned to ourselves, where are the poor whom we visit, the apprentices whom we patronize, the ignorant whom we teach? In order to practice charity, we must belong to a Work, a Conference, or otherwise the time allotted to the poor never comes. » Let us then mediate on that thought, mediate on it atentively : besides a Society that does not grow, decays; absence, sickness, change of circumstances, death brings in but too many vacancies; and, if we do not fill them beforehand by inviting to us such persons as we may admit, a day will come when we shall be frightened at our loneliness. This has happened in these late times of crisis, among a few Conferences, which the departure of some of their members left in a state of lamentable perplexity. It would again take place, if increased perseverance were not displayed. I know that we have to be cautious, and, allow me to remind you of it, never to introduce among us any but men animated with our own spirit, that is sincere christians who perform all the duties prescribed by the Church *without blushing at any;* but within those limits, which I cannot too earnestly beseech the Conferences to observe, are there not, especially in large cities, many Christians charitable and capable of edifying us, and exciting us to virtue, whose names would be an honour to our lists, who might share in our labours; and who do not, solely because no one invites them ? Undoubtedly, everywhere, and with the exceptino of a

few places less favourably situated, the number of the members might be doubled by the slightest efforts, sometimes even still more increased, and there woud be so many more devoted servants gained over to the poor of Jesus Christ.

In the fourth place, do we do enough for the religious instructions of the poor. That instruction, we must acknowledge, is almost entirely wanting among them, and, if the poor suffer from the need of material resources, they suffer still more from the total ignorance of the truths of faith. Here, prevails total indifference for religion : there, open hostility ; and those two evils spring from one and the same cause, ignorance. Indeed what rightful and honest heart could know Jesus Christ without loving him, and admiring ,at least speculatively, the beauty of his law? The poor therefore are much more in need of truth, of the words that come from God's mouth, that of bread and clothing. Well, among us, we have for their instruction the Holy-Families, the familiar Instructions, the Society of Saint Francis Xavier; but do these associations, that flourish in a few Conferences, easily extend and propagate themselves ? Alas ! they do not. Most of us admire and forge.t *Landatur et alget.* We return with emotion from a meeting of the Holy Family, but we do not think of establishing it among ourselves. We praise the Society of Saint Francis Xavier, and we stop at the first obstacle. We may have libraries, but we allow the books to accumulate and grow mouldy in

them. Instead of carrying them to the poor, if they do not come for them, we leave them in a corner, and say : « The poor, the mechanics do not read. » As if millions of volumes were not every day devoured by them ; as if the school, catechism, patronage-house, the Societies of Saint Francis Xavier, of the Holy Family, and above all the visiting of poor were not always open channels for the families entrusted to our care, to draw instruction and faith from, if we knew how to supply them. All that no doubt requires pains, time, perseverance; but without those sacrifices, what merit can we acquire?

The field of those Works is necessarily unlimited, since they are either individual or transient. Every one may here follow the impulse of his heart and the dictates of his charity; but there are two works to which I more especially call the attention of those brothers, — I mean the visiting of the sick and the teaching of the catechism, with the concurrence and permission of the Clergy. The usefulness of the former will not be denied by those who know the destitution in which the sick poor are left in isolated dwellings, farms or even in villages. The latter is no less indispensable. Indeed, what difficulties do not the village priests experience in instructing the children for their First Communion? How much ignorance to dispel, apathy to overcome, inactivity to rouse up! How many times have not the plainest truths to be repeated, to penetrate into those hard and re-

fractory memories, and to engrave in those hearts, already engrossed by earthly interest the pure principles which alone constitute the true Christian. You have already been edified by reading in the General Report for 1848, the fruits produced at Aix by a Work organized on Sundays to go and teach catechism to the little children in the country. Such are the results I covet for our Society upon which they would draw down great blessings, because they would secure for the Church a generation of Christians provided with sound instruction...

I have lastly to answer a question that has been put to the Council-General, and to which I call your whole attention.

The Council-General is often asked, and has been more particularly on a recent occasion, to state the precise cases when the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul are allowed to sign letters, documents, articles, with that denomination, and those much more numerous when it is important that they should not.

Our answer will be plain and precise, and will, we hope, put and end to every difficulty.

Whenever a member has not consulted his Conference, he has no right to assume the title of member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and to write either to civil magistrates or to religious superiors, or to private persons with that title, even when speaking of affairs connected with the concerns of the Conference. A private member has no right to commit it, in some manner, by setting forward its name, to

make it responsible for his opinion, or perhaps involuntary error. The right of engaging the responsibility of the Conference, belongs only to the Presidents *in urgent cases;* for, when the Conference can be consulted, it should be done. For a still better reason, when things unconnected with the object of the Society are treated, affairs religious, political, even charitable, but for which we have not met, nobody, whether a private member, a President, of a Council either Particular or General, should connect the name of the Society with their opinion. The reason of this is obvious. We are not members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul for any other object than visiting the poor, patronizing children, undertaking, in short, the good Works which charity suggests. That title is not a public title, or one of honour inseparably connected with our names in all the circumstances of our lives; it is merely an engagement to be more zealous, more charitable, and especially more humble. So, using it as thing to be vain of, or as a means of success, would be erring most seriously against the Society and against ourselves.

To sum up, then, we may act as members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, only when acting in the name of our Conference, when we have been authorized to do so, and for the affairs that especially concern it. When these three conditions are not fulfilled, we must carefully abstain.

Believe me, etc. AD. BAUDON.

Paris, November 1st, 1851.
All Saints' Day.

Dear Sir and Brother,

I now pass to several points, of which the Council-General requests me to remind you.

1. Several times already, the Council has thought it its duty to call the attention of the Conferences to the inconveniences of publishing our works and reports in political newspapers. The greater number of the Conferences, with an eagerness for which we cannot be too grateful, accepted those observations, and sedulously adhered to them. Nevertheless, from time to time, that rule adopted by the Society from the very beginning is set aside. I certainly admit that those publications offer some advantages : I know too that it is not always easy to prevent publicity from seizing upon our reports, and that we sometimes have to resist spontaneous kindness ; but however I beseech the Conferences *never* to court such insertions in *public* papers, and to prevent them *whenever* they can. In the present circumstances amidst the conflict of the opinions and differences that divide the most upright and sterling souls, our Society, founded all for charity, and only for charity, must more than ever keep that neutral ground : and not only does it matter that it be really neutral; but, for the good it has to do, for its religious action on the poor, for the regeneration of its members, it is important it should be considered as such by every candid man. Well,

public papers necessarily have a political colour; they are enlisted in this or that party; they are the representation of some idea or other, and if our Reports appear in them, if the name of the Society is repeated by them with praise, it is impossible that in the course of time, many persons should not attribute to us this or that political opinion. Vainly shall we, by our deeds and words, avoid that intercourse as much as possible : the blow will nevertheless be dealt, and all our Conferences will suffer from it. That should therefore be a subject of serious reflection for our brothers.

2. The season we are entering upon necessarily brings on a great movement in our Conferences. In all the cities that have a Faculty of law or medicine, and especially in Paris, many young men will arrive from colleges and ecclesiastical seminaries, to finish their studies in those Faculties, who have hitherto preserved their faith and morals, and wish to place them under the tutelary protection of charity. I advise all our brothers of the towns which those young men, still full of piety, are about to leave, not to let them go without a letter of introduction for the Conferences of the cities in which they are to stay, and especially not without begging them earnestly to deliver those letters on the very day of their arrival and *before engaging definite lodgings* (1). That detail may seem

(1) It is however preferable from every point of view, to recommend directly these young men through

insignificant at first sight : but all those of our brothers, who have themselves passed through those trials, know how important it is to be directed at first to respectable houses, and not to be left, with no experience of that new life, to the mercy of chance or dangerous companions. Very often those first moments decide whether a young man is to be for ever good, or bad. Therefore for all who have avoided those perils or who have never been exposed to them, it is a real duty to hold out a willing hand to such as have to pass through them; this is one of the most sweet applications of the counsels in the Gospel : « Do to others as you would have others do unto you. » This is also one of the most positive duties of our Society, and one which has perhaps drawn most blessings upon it.

And with regard to that, it will doubtless be to the purpose to speak on a point that has real importance.

There has sometimes been a complaint in the Conferences, that the new comers are not properly received, that they are suffered to sit down unnoticed among their new brothers, without any words of welcome and encouragement, without even being introduced to the old members ; thence it happens that, in large cities especially, the members very often do not know each other, even by name or at least there no

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the Secretariat of the Society, 6, rue de Furstenberg, which will give special attention in either giving necessary addresses, or in transmitting recommendations.

longer prevails amongst all that intimacy and cordiality which ought to be the essence of our Conferences; then the new comers are discouraged, become timid, stand apart, and if they do not leave the Conference, which sometimes happens, they have less taste for it, and come to like it only after a long time. A very simple means is offered to remedy that evil, more serious than may be thought at first sight, as it threatens the very life of our Conferences; it is that, in every Conference, a member appointed by the President, if not the President himself, should have special charge of the new comers, in order to initiate them to our usages, to make them acquainted with the Rule and our other publications, to establish relations of confraternity between them and the other members, and when they come from other towns to give them all useful information for settling properly. If those introducers are obliging, they will no doubt powerfully remedy the danger that we speak of; and the Conferences will then feel an increase of activity and expansion, and of that harmless cheerfulness which constitutes their charm and attraction.

3. In many cities, we might almost say in all those which attract a great number of students, it is also a general complaint that our Conferences, founded in behalf of youth, and intended to keep it by charity under the sweet ties of religion, reckon few or no young men. « We are all old », say those who write to us, « we do not attract youth, and after us,

what will become of the Conferences ? » Without quite sharing those fears, we must acknowledge there is a remedy wanted. For, if men already advanced in age and mature in piety do reap fruit for their own improvement from their mutual contact, how much more valuable still are not those fruits for young and ardent souls that have to resist the passions of their age, the counsels of friends perhaps far from being good christians, and principally their own inexperience and loneliness! Evidently, if it is good to form a Conference solely with men advanced in age, for want of other elements, if we must not stop in creating a Conference for the want of younger men, it is most good and excellent that there be in the same Conference a happy union of mature and younger brothers in order that the qualities of the former should support those of the latter.

But, you say, how can we draw youth to us? We call them eagerly, and no one comes. Here are two means that can be used. The first, adopted in several Conferences, consists in forming within the Conference a little section of aspirant members, and giving those young brothers an interest in our works, by entrusting to them, under the guidance of an older member, the care of a few old men, and the management of their small resourecs.

At the age of 12, 13 or 14, when the salutary impressions of the first communion are still powerful, it is easy thus to assemble young children, and teach them the sweet apprenticeship

of charity; and then, when arrived at the age of 18 or 20, those young men, in some manner reared in the midst of the Conference, accustomed to attend it without any fear of human respect will easily join it as ordinary members; while it is much less easy to drawn to it isolated young men of the same age, whom bashfulness and timidity keep away, and who know they will not find about them brothers of their age with whom they can more easily sympathize. The organization of special Conferences for those who aspire to become members does therefore seem to us a sure means of destroying the evil.

The second means would consist in establishing a connexion with the Conferences of educational institutions, which, thanks to God, are beginning to rise among us, and will, according to appearances, become still more numerous. Whether those Conferences exist in the same town as the ordinary Conferences, or at some distance, it is easy to enter into friendly intercourse with them, to exchange Reports, to assist in their General Meetings, and to invite them in their turn to those of the Conferences. Those relations will naturally induce the young men, when they leave their Schools, to join the Conferences of the towns in which they reside, and the passage from college to charitable life will be immediately effected.. I do specially recommend to our Conferences that capital point : for the Conferences of educational establishments are real seminaries for our Society, and it is of importance to avail ourselves of the

new vigour with which they can every year supply us.

In the last place, it is not enough to draw new brothers to our meetings; we must endeavour to make those meetings pleasant by a gentle and justifiable cheerfulness (1).

If that advice so true and of such admirable simplicity is followed, if we besides obviate the timidity, so natural to young men, and do not let them stand apart for want of kind welcome, if we stimulate their zeal by asking much of their charity and leisure, they I am fully convinced, will come more willingly and in greater number to fill up our Conferences, and it will be a gain for all, ,for them in the first place, then for the poor and for our Society.

Believe me, etc.,

AD. BAUDON.

Paris, November 1st, 1852,
All Saints' Day.

Sir and dear Brother,

I shall confine myself, for this time, to such points of the Rule as may be called secondary, but which gain importance from their number; and the usefulness of this seems to me

(1) See Circular 1st. November, 1847.

the greater, because if, in general, we like to read over and over again the *preliminary considerations of the Rule*, we most often neglect the more tedious reading of the *articles* themselves...

I begin with what relates to the Boards of the Conferences.

1st. Personnel of the Conferences.

Our Society, as we have often said, has for its special object the christian improvement of its members; therefore all that relates to them is the chief point and the subject of most of the letters which we receive. The principal questions addressed to us relate to the choice and duties of the members of the Board and especially the Presidents. We shall answer them briefly.

1. — *President.* We all understand the importance of his office; for although the President is never among us but a sort of elder brother, the *primus inter pares*, one of us, who has to direct the labours of all, without subjecting any to his will; experience has shown that as the *President is so is the Conference.* If he be active, pious and zealous; if he loves our works, and know how to communicate to others the charitable fervour which animates him, the Conference is sure to thrive. If, on the contrary, he is not punctual and assiduous, if he often puts off to the next day the execution of the measures that have been voted, if he lets meetings grow monotonous, and the discussions come to no end, the Conference will neces-

sarily suffer. Consequently when a Conference (1) has to make the difficult choice of a president, it must, *first of all*, examine whether he has the leisure requisite for attending to the works and interest of the Conference, whether he has *zeal*, which often makes a man find sufficient leisure ; whether he has *activity* of mind as well as *maturity* of judgment; whether he *understands* our institutions, and will consequently be able to overcome the difficulties that always occur in the practice of charity, instead of shrinking from them ; whether he has the spirit of *conciliation* that prevents or appeases dissensions; and, lastly whether he has that lively and ardent faith that communicates itself to others and multiplies forces by gaining the favours of God. All this we should most look for in the President of a Conference. The other qualities, such as well established and deserved consideration in the neighbourhood, great personal generosity, the advantages of birth or fortune, should rank only afterwards. If they are found at the same time as the above mentioned qualities in a President, we must thank Divine Providence as for a signal favour; but the latter alone should not determine our choice; for the prosperity of the Conferences demands first of

(1) Whenever several Conferences exist in the same city, and a Particular Council has therefore to be organised, the appointment of the presidents of Conferences and special Works belongs by article 31 st of the Rule, to the Particular Council.

all, the personal qualities of those who direct them; their action is not honorary and nominal, but real and effective it is a direct and constantly active participation in the labours of the Conference. Without those essential conditions of prosperity and life, other external qualities will be of slender assistance; this the history of Christian Societies teaches no less than faith.

The President of a Conference is the soul of it, as we have said, and that thought cannot be too present to his mind ; but however, through excess of zeal, he must not, as it were, absorb the activity of the Conference in his own. It is good that he should see and direct every important thing done by it, and share in it at least by his advice; it is not proper that he be overloaded and should assume alone the burden of all the works; for not only would that method, in most cases, exceed his strength, but it would present the serious objection of accustoming the other members to rely too much upon the President, and not enough on themselves; of therefore allowing their zeal to abate, and, in the case of a change of President, of exposing the Conference to a real and sometimes serious crisis.

But the President has not only to attend to the Works of the Conference: he must, besides, also take care of its members. Thus, when one of them is sick or in affliction the President will be the medium through which the Conference, will fulfil the duties required by circumtances. Should a member, formerly active

and zealous, gradually withdraw from the Conference, and leave it entirely, it is the President's duty to take notice of it, to see if anything has hurt this brother, and whether it is not possible to soothe his feelings; or, should that abatement of zeal unfortunately come from abatement of faith and forgetfulness of religion it is still the President's office to attend to it, and take prudently and rapidly the most proper measures to stop the evil, as for the Vice Presidents who are the substitutes and who must, consequently, be intimately united with him, the rules conserning them are the same as those just explained.

2. *Secretary.* — The office of Secretary though lest important than that of President. does however deserve a special mention ; for, if the President has the whole direction, the Secretary has the practical detail of it. On his punctuality or neglect will therefore depend a mutitude of good or of petty annoyances.

Thus, when the Secretary is absent or late, the minutes are not read, or cannot be at the time appointed by the Rule, which is the best ; when he does not note down exactly the families visited and the names of their visitors, objectionable irregularities are the consequence; some families are long forgotten, and suffer from that abandonment, others, on the contrary, receive unnecessarily double assistance. Although those slight irregularities are not serious in themselves, they nevertheless annoy some

members, cause the loss of valuable time, and diminish the general animation of the Conference.

Such inconveniences are, *in a certain degree*, unavoidable in a Society like ours, composed of so many changeable elements and men who are often very busy. However they are far from being serious in the great majority of the Conferences; in most of them, on the contrary, all works with admirable regularity. I should nevertheless wish the necessary punctuality to prevail among all; the register of the poor to be always in due order. I would advise that, opposite the name and direction of each family and the usual assistance granted, one should write, in the column of observation, the creditable facts that concern them, the extraordinary assistance granted, and the principal remarks made by their visitors. Such a list, which to be kept in order would hardly take a quarter of an hour a week, would afford valuable information and be especially useful to new visitors.

3. *Treasurer.* — If punctuality is necessary in the Secretary, it is still more so in the Treasurer: for, if he is absent from the meeting, the members cannot have their tickets, and the poor are exposed to starvation, if he does not keep his accounts in perfect order, he may commit mistakes. Though on that point there have been as yet very few complaints in the Society, I think it good to remind a few Conferences of Article 19 of the Rule, by which it is said that the Treasurer shall exhibit the state of

his cash-book at every meeting. That article is of real importance : on the one side, by every time making known to members the amount of cash on hand, it will make every one ask only in proportion to the available resources, and on the other, because it is a security against errors. I therefore request the Conferences that have delayed the weekly accounts of the Treasurers, simply to return to the observance of the Rule. For a still better reason I shall request the Treasurers never to let the Conference be behindhand with its creditors; that would be the surest means of ruining it.

Meetings of the Board of the Conference. — A thing important to be recommended, Sir and dear Brother, is that the Board of the Conference should frequently meet. The general Rule has appointed no fixed periods for such meetings, and they should indeed change, according to circumstances ; but it is nevertheless important that the President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, should from time to time consult together, either to settle certain details that would useless fatigue the Conference, or to prepare the measures to be proposed to its deliberation or to fix upon the means of carrying out the decisions adopted. This usage is perhaps not general,, and I think it is of use to mention it.

Admission of new members. — I shall also call the attention of the Conferences to the admission of new members, less to repeat what has already been said so often, that we should

admit among us only sincere christians, fulfilling without weakness or ostentation all the duties imposed by the Church, and particularly that of paschal communion : less to revert to that rule which could not be forgotten with impunity, than again to insist upon the mode itself of introducing members.

Article 18th of the Rule provides that « if new candidates are presented, the President shall state their names »,, and the Circular of July 14th, 1841, in some manner developing this article, says : « besides, we request those, who intend to present a candidate, always to confer previously on the subject with the President, who has more special charge of the direction and honour of the Conference. »

The wisdom of such a recommendation is easily understood for if those who present a candidate, *instead of conferring privately with the President*, do first, as happens too often, publicly propose the candidate to the Conference, it becomes much more difficult to prevent an undesirable accession. In public any discussion of a man's name, any hesitation, any question assumes the appearance of a personal insult; then, unless some serious charge can be brought against the candidate, every one stands back and remains silent, though he may secretly deplore the new admission; therefore, new members come in without the approval of all; we do not wish to accept, but we dare not reject them, and thence arise in the Conferences annoyances and difficulties. If, on the contrary,

the presentation is always made with the agreement of the President, it is likely that it takes place only because it ought, and that satisfactory testimonials have been received from the friends of the candidate. The reasons in support of what we say are numberless, and the Council-General earnestly insists that the Conferences should not, either through carelessness or forgetfulness, depart from a Rule so simple in its application, but so important in its results.

2. — *Order of the Meetings.*

The general Rule, from Article 15 to 26, lays down the order of the meetings in the Conferences. I think it useful to insist upon a few of the Rules prescribed in these Articles, and especially upon their spirit.

A first point of importance is not to let the meetings grow tediously long. The business of the poor must, doubtless, not be transacted hastily and with undue precipitancy; but also we must allow each affair only a reasonable time, so that in general, within an hour or an hour and a half, the meeting is over. Otherwise we run the risk of wearying the members by too long attendance, of discouraging those who are busy, or accustoming them to come only at the end, *to give in their contribution and receive their tickets;* a new proof that questions of detail often have a decisive influence over the whole of our institutions.

It is the President especially who should cut the evil short, by stopping discussions that are

unduly prolonged, ,and recalling the members, mildy but persistently to practical views. If he wishes to succeed in this, it is good he should draw out for himself, before each meeting, an order of the day modelled on what the rules provide for the order of the meetings. Then, as soon as the discussion wanders from the point or is undaly prolonged, he may more easily insist that it be closed, because serious or more urgent business is still to be considered ; and at the same time he is more certain of forgetting nothing, as before the meeting he has reflected on the principal questions that occur, and the written text reminds him of what the discussion might make him forget. But if the greater share in the good direction given to the meeting is the President's, he must also be seconded by the members. All must endeavour, *as much as possible, and whenever they are not hindered by urgent business*, to arrive at the time appointed for the opening of the meeting. Nothing so much disturbs order or rather makes it impossible, as a succession of persons who arrive, withdraw, rise, take their tickets, give into the Treasurer's purse in the middle of the meeting. For the sake of the good order of the meeting as well as for that of the poor which is connected with it, it is greatly to be wished that every one should bind himself to more punctuality, even at the expense of his pleasures, or of affairs that are not indispensable.

A second point to be noticed, Sir and dear Brother, is the great importance given by our

Rule to the reading made at the beginning of the meetings. « The prayer and reading, « says Article 15 », should be attented to with the most serious attention, the object of the Conference being no less to keep up the piety of the members as to relieve the poor. » Those words, so short and simple, require no reflection for their support; and if, in a few Conferences, the Article is slightly forgotten I hope it will suffice to place the text before the eyes of the members, in order to remedy the evil. But I think it proper to mention here what is done in one of our most ancient Conferences, and what I have always thought well calculated to render the reading more interesting. In that Conference, whenever a member,, in private readings, meets with remarkable passages, that may edify his brethen, he communicates them to the President, and, with the approbation of the latter, to the Conference. Thus, edification is supported by interest, and zeal nourished by the new aliments it receives from all quarters.

In the third place, certain Conferences should be more careful than they are to read the *Bulletin of the Society*. I understand, Sir and dear Brother, that the Bulletin which might often serve as a spiritual reading, should undoubtedly not be the only one, most of all I understand that many of the subjects it contains, useful for the reading of every one in private, are not suited to an assembly that has little time at its disposal. But allow me to express my re-

gret at seeing that, in some Conferences, the Bulletin is hardly known, and that even the parts containing the advice given by the Council-General are not read. Hence, those monthly communications, to which the generality of the Society attaches such importance, are totally interrupted, and some members are acquainted neither with the newly undertaken works, nor with the edifying facts that occur, nor with the progress of our Society, so well calculated to excite our zeal. I therefore avail myself of this opportunity to ask that *at least* every month, and in every Conference, a summary account be given of the principal recommendations or the most important facts contained in the Bulletin, and then that the Bulletin itself be circulated among the members : they might form associations of ten to receive it, as is done for the Annals of the Propagation of Faith.

Lastly, we shall consider a detail, which, though it may seem trifling at first sight, is nevertheless serious; I mean the choice of the place of meeting. There are several Conferences which I might name, and which, to my personal knowledge, do really suffer, for want of a proper room. Dark, badly lit, still worse fitted up, certain Conference rooms rather resemble a tomb than the meeting place of members of Saint Vincent de Paul. When the meeting takes place at night, one can hardly see oneself and recognise one's neighbour by the assistance of a few lights too sparingly disposed,

and it is literally true, as I myself have seen, that the President presides in the dark, and is compelled to ask every member his name, which he cannot guess in the obscurity. Now, let any one tell me, if with such imperfect arrangements, one can hope to attract the youth who need movement, light and life. Who can expect, with attractions so slender, to make up for other pleasures, even that of walking? Can one believe that the members will not find the meeting monotonous and repair to it with reluctance ? To hold such an opinion requires a dose of optimism that I, for one, dot no possess.

It is therefore important that all the Conferences should have *proper* meeting-rooms. I do not at all mean that we should have there the refinement of elegance and luxury, that would be quite out of place in a Society devoted to the service of the poor : but material precautions, often simple and inexpensive should provide for what the real interest of the Conference requires.

§ 3. — *The work of Visiting of the Poor.*

The visiting of the poor is the great Work of the Conferences, that which best suits their members, their intimate requirements, that which is easiest and most attractive, in short that without which *any Conference langu.shes*, as we are taught by nineteen years' experience. This has been said so often before us, that I can but refer the members, who might feel any

doubts on the subject, to the many passages of the Manual relative to the point, and principally to the Circular of July 2nd, 1845, which bears specially upon it.

But, if I do not consider the general question, it is because many details occur to me that are not yet included in the Circulars, and deserve to be mentioned.

Thus, in the first place, it is highly important that the families be assigned to the different members only by the President, and with proper discrimination. A member may suit nearly every family, and not succed with some of the poor; he may be too weak, too timid, or on the contrary too strict, to fulfil, successfully his charitable mission with certain exceptional minds. If the President does not pay the greatest attention to the distribution of the poor, if he relies on chance for the performance of that duty, good may very often become the more difficult, or impossible. It is, besides, important that the families, in which there are females still young should be entrusted only to members of mature age, and placed not only above peril, but even above suspicion. As for young females *who are alone*, I think it useless to repeat that the Society does not visit them, remembering, as the Rules say, that « we have no mission with persons of the other sex, if they are young, lest we should find our own ruin, while we seek to bring salvation to others ».

But in order to distribute the families as they should be, the President must, in the second place, be personally acquainted with them. For that purpose, there are two means between which he has to choose : he must either periodically, at least once a year, make a complete round of the families, or himself make the first visits in every newly admitted family. Those two modes of action, which a few Presidents have found leisure to combine, cannot be too strongly recommended, because they secure the good direction of the Conferences in that respect.

In the third place, it is quite proper not to let every member be quite free, as in some Conferences, to ask for his poor as many tickets as he may please. Otherwise, the natural tendency that inclines us to pity more the miseries directly before our eyes the pleasure of giving our poor more assistance than before, exaggerated timidity before certain importunities, and, shall I add, a sort of secret vanity that makes us wish to favour those whom we assist; in short all those causes together would be most dangerous, first to the Conference Fund, and especially to the equitable distribution of relief. When each member alone may determine the allowance of his poor, unavoidable injustice will be committed in course of time, and some will receive too much, while others have too little. It has therefore wisely been decided by some Conferences, that the amount of assistance to be granted to each

case shall be determined by a committee of enquiry, composed of members *always the same*. Those members visit all the families that solicit admission, and propose to the Conference to write them down in certain categories, according to the degree of their poverty; then, once or twice a year they revise the list, in order to submit to the Conference such modifications as may seem proper. This organisation does not at all impair the liberty of action of the visitors, since they are always to be heard, and their opinion is of great weight; but it secures among the poor a proportion of assistance as equitable as may be hoped for.

In the fourth place. it is greatly to be wished that the members should not themselves give to their poor, *from their own purse*, any assistance besides that coming from the Conference. Indeed, if that were allowed, families would cease to be assisted according to their real wants they would be assisted according to the greater compassion or fortune of the visitor. Thence would arise this serious inconvenience, that the poor would prefer certain visitors, not as more affectionate and attentive, but as more generous or richer ; thence it would become impossible for other visitors to supply the place of those who preceded them, and to render their counsels and exhortations equally acceptable; thence, in some Conferences where that usage prevailed, the complaints of some members asking no more to visit the poor that formerly belonged to other brothers, *because they were*

not rich enough. These considerations, Sir and dear Brother, will perhaps be sufficient to recall to the common rule those among us who forget it from excess of zeal; for they will no doubt acknowledge that, since they have agreed to lay their offerings together they should not each go and give separate alms. The poor will not be the losers, I am convinced of it; for the weekly collection will necessarily be increased by the amount of those individual donations, and the common fund, thus augmented will be better able to supply the necessities of the families.

I shall, in the fifth place, answer a question often asked of the Council-General by its correspondents : should the members who have not assisted at the meeting of the Conference be allowed in the interval to go the Treasurer for their tickets?

That point the Council-General has always decided negatively. It does, indeed, believe that the real interests of the poor and of the Conference are both opposed to its being allowed. The interest of the poor, — for the members having no longer a positive and necessary interest to come to the Conference for their tickets, would much more easily cease to attend the meetings punctually and the collection which is the chief resource of the fund must needs suffer, *even if a money-box were placed at the treasurer's residence*, as some have proposed. — The interest of the Conference, — for by staying away very frequently, the

members might lose its spirit and habits, or at least would feel less zealous as they became estranged from the daily little affairs that compose the life of the Conferences. In this two-fold respect, the facility allowed to the members in this matter, would be injurious to the poor, whom some, at first sight, might fancy they are thus serving. Besides, in order to conciliate all, nothing seems better than what is practised in some Conferences. The tickets are given only at the meeting; but the members who cannot attend get theirs through a Brother member who asks for them, or write to the President in order to explain the cause of their absence. At the same time, they are careful to send in their usual offering; so that the punctuality of all is stimulated, and the rule is not overlooked.

Sixthly, all the members of our Society know that the principal object of our visits to the poor is to render them better, that is more christian-like, in practice as in faith. If it were not for that important aim, our visits would have, so to speak, neither object nor result. But it is not enough that religious good be done; the Conference must, for the common edification, know that it is done; it must be mentioned and spoken of it among us, lest the new comers hearing of nothing, should neglect it.

We should therefore frequently speak, in the Conferences, of the religious condition of the families we visit, and principally about the time of great festivals; at Easter most especially, a

general review should be made, and every visitor, *at least once a year*, should give an account of the result of his mission. If we were tempted to applaud ourselves too highly on any success obtained, that feeling would be sadly repressed by the much more numerous failures we have to lament; and our meeting will leave but the joy of having seen a *few* souls return to God, and the salutary wish to recall a much greater number to religion.

Seventhly, it will soon be two years since the Council-General undertook the useful publication of the Short Readings. It has been rewarded by the religious fruits produced, and by the eagerness of most Conferences to diffuse the work : but, as there is always something left to wish for, here are two demands that the Council-General desires me to transmit. The first is, that in every Conference, a member be designated to distribute the copies; the labour is slight and can be done in the Conference with the giving out of the tickets; but it must be done with order, so that the numbers be not displaced, and all the poor should receive them regularly; well, there can be order only with unity in the distribution. The second request is that we should endeavour to propagate them still more extensively. Many Conferences in France are not yet aware of their existence; others distribute, them only among their poor and in their town. It were greatly to be wished that all should follow the example of other Conferences, which through the Parish

Priests, and with their concurrence, introduce those little sheets in all country villages, and spread even 10.000 copies in one district. How much good springs from them! What ignorance of religion is dispelled, how many prejudices are weakened and good counsels given! The most venerable testimonies prove it.

Receive, Sir and dear Brother, the expression of my affectionate respect in our Lord Jesus Christ.

AD. BAUDON.

Paris, November, 1st, 1859.
Feast of All Saints.

Sir and dear Brother,

Our Society continues to be developed, as you may perceive by the general report which has just been concluded, and by the monthly accounts of the *Bulletin*. We should fervently thank God for this, because there is reason to hope, that such an increase of the Conferences will facilitate greater assistance for our dear poor, and will tend to rekindle the zeal of Christians by the sweet exercise of charity. But, in order that this increase of the number of our Conferences may afford us unalloyed joy, it is necessary that the new as well as the old Conrences, should continue to be thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of our Society, and it is

on this very serious subject that I wish to address you .

In considering the few thoughts which we may mutually have on this subject, it seems to me, Sir and dear Brother, that two words sum up the duties of our members, and I shall designate them thus : — *to give and to act.*

To give, in the first instance, our money, then our time and heart; *to act*, that is to say, to busy ourselves ardently and unceasingly with the interests of the poor; not to be contented with the little that has been done, but to seek to do more every day for the material relief of those who suffer, and especially for their religious improvement; in fact, is not this the whole business of our Brothers; is not the double condition of the life, duration, and extension of our dear Society? Let us therefore enter a little further into this two-fold thought ; perhaps some practical results may proceed from it.

And first, our primary duty in the Society of Saint-Vincent de Paul *is to give.* Its members are not the more or less zealous and intelligent distributors of the alms of the public; they are before all else called themselves to give from their own purse, from their savings and superfluity : and what they receive from without should, in their mind, be only a precarious and accidental resource, and on which, consequently, they should never reckon.

Now, do we accomplish this duty everywhere, do we accomplish it always? Are the offerings, that we put into the treasury of the

Conferences every week, proportioned to the resources which Providence has bestowed upon us, or rather are they not measured out with too much parsimony? Here, Sir and dear Brother, I do not wish to set myself up as judge, nor especially as censor of any Conference — but, I question, I interrogate, and I appeal to the conscience of each : I ask them to cast their eyes over the accounts for the end of the year, such as they are, sent to us for the Annual Report, to see what is the offerings of the members stand to this total, the total of their receipts and what rates. If large, proportioned to the fortune and position of the members, let them congratulate themselves; but if, as I have reason to fear, the answer is not everywhere so satisfactory, let the Conferences, liable to this reproach form the generous resolution to amend and to do better for the future.

On this subject, the Council-General has sometimes been asked if they would think well of fixing for each member a minimum, that he should give at the collection. The Council-General has been unable to do this for two reasons : first, because the offerings should be always spontaneous and free, amongst the active members; secondly because it would be impossible to fix this minimum; for, what would be insufficient for a rich town would be exorbitant for a village, or a poor country.

But, if the Council-General has not been able to lay down for all a minimum — a proportion to give at the weekly collection — no-

thing is more desirable or easy than for each of us, himself, to fix the minimum that he can give, and to weigh it in presence of his conscience and of God. Besides, if we possess the spirit of charity, is it not highly probable that we shall make the share of the poor larger than any one would have dared to do for us?

To give his money, such is the first duty of a disciple of Saint Vincent de Paul; but that is not enough, he must also give his time; and there perhaps I have again a few wishes to express. If, indeed, I am to believe the complaints of certain Presidents, the heaviest portion of the burden of the Works falls on a small number of members, always the same; and still, these indefatigable members, whom we find constantly in the breach, are, with few exceptions, men occupied elsewhere, and finding time for charity only by a kind of perpetual energy, and knowing how, by dint of activity, to employ their every moment with willingness. On the other hand these Presidents add that the members who have leisure are not wanting, but are far from being the most punctual; that they are frequently absent from the meetings, absorbed as they are by worldly ties and social duties more or less real, and that, consequently, they abstain from taking part in works, ever so little binding, such as the Patronages, Holy Families, economical ovens, and Librairies.

Here again, Sir and dear Brother, I shall be careful not to blame any one, and I shall confine myself to begging of each person to con-

tinue the examination of his time which I have advised on the employment of his money. The subject is a grave one, and deserves reflection from all of us, were it only to quiet our conscience and lessen responsibility before God.

In short, in order that this gift of ourselves may be complete, we must add to it that of our heart, Here, Sir and dear Brother, I cannot give you a better example amongst men than that of your holy patron, the Blessed Vincent de Paul. Read His touching life, meditate on it with the attention which it deserves, and you certainly will admire the treasures of devotion and true charity which it contains. Saint Vincent de Paul did not assist the poor with a cold compassion for their miseries; he relieved them because he loved them in the depths of his heart; he could not witness their troubles without being affected by them, nor their tears, without mingling his own with theirs. How he suffered when he could not relieve their miseries, and how he rejoiced when he obtained abundant succour for them! How he stripped himself, how he improverished his community, in order to procure assistance for them! How he knew how to overcome his timidity for the purpose of supplicating the rich and powerful in their favour! Let us study this sublime life, and we shall become quite inflamed with love for the poor : we shall give them not only our time and money, but our hearts likewise.

Besides, at what period was this gift of ourselves more necessary than at present? Un-

fortunately the poor very frequently set very little value on the alms which we give, and consider it in itself as a debt; it is always too trifling for their wants, and they hardly feel grateful for it. But that which touches them — that which, we must hope will ever touch them — is the affability with which the gift is carried to them, the delicacy of conduct and the manifestation of feeling. By this token, they feel that they are loved truly; they bestow themselves in return, they show that they are disposed to listen to the advice that may be given them, and, consequently, they think of reforming their morals and conduct. If, therefore, we wish to gain really the affection of our poor people for the purpose of improving them, let us give them our heart; let us visit them, not with coldness or indifference, but with that effusion which Saint Vincent de Paul testified to them, and which issued from a love drawn from the heart of Jesus Christ Himself.

To give ourselves to the Poor, under all the forms that I have just pointed out to you, such is, Sir and dear Brother, the first word that sums up the duties of a member of our Conferences. I shall pass on to the second word which I mentioned to you just now, and I am about to see with you how we should *act*.

First, is it necessary that I should mention what is the sphere in which our Conferences and Brothers, as brothers, should act?

« Our Society », says the Rule, « is all Charity; politics are foreign to it ».

When, therefore, I speak of the necessity of acting, it is only in the sense of ministrations in the works of charity; this is too elementary to be discussed amongst us. But this definition once given, or rather repeated, I shall entreat the Conferences and their members to act, to act incessantly, and to act with all energy of their zeal and charity.

Doubtless, it is praiseworthy to visit some poor persons, but is that sufficient? Could we not frequently relieve more, if we were more zealous? Could we not add some families to the very short list of the Conference? I am convinced of this, Sir and dear Brother, with regard to several Conferences; and I should be very happy if these lines, which I address to all, could rouse those members of our family, of whom it may be said with the Apostle, *dormiunt multi*. Then, if we visit a sufficient number of the poor, do we busy ourselves about taking the proper measures to render these visits fruitful and more complete? When we gather together at meetings, do we think of aught but in the distribution of bread and meat tickets in proportion to the miseries of the poor, or do we go beyond this solicitude, which is certainly most praiseworthy, but incomplete? Do we occupy ourselves with making the children go to catechism or to school, or in giving to the parents good books, which turn them from bad ones, and instruct them in the truths of the faith? Do we seek to make the poor advance in good conduct, morality and reli-

gion? In a material point of view, if any steps be requisite to place a person in a situation, to find employment for a workman, do we take sufficient trouble? In a word, do we act with that enthusiasm which charity bestows? This is, Sir and dear Brother, a first subject of reflection.

And again, in the large cities, in which we count so many Conferences, there are immense populations, who, absorbed by the labors of industry, are without any practical religion and even without faith. With them marriage is not blessed by the church, the first communion is either not made, or made without preparation; and baptism is sometimes not given to children. If we merely follow the usual routine, we shall think but little of the populations, the access to whom is so difficult, whose morals are often so depraved, but whom, for this reason, we should love more in Jesus Christ than the others, because they are more disinherited. Let us therefore go to them — undoubtedly with prudence and precaution, providing ourselves with the necessary information — but let us go to them with courage. These souls, however abandoned they may be are not the less redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and if we can save only a few of them, we should consider ourselves well rewarded by God.

We must therefore act in this direction, by interesting ourselves not only in the ordinary poor but especially in those who are disinherited from the faith; moreover, we must also act in

many other ways. Thus, our Conference confines itself perhaps only to visiting the poor; up to this time it has not thought of any other Work, Let us study the accounts of the *Bulletin*, the history of the Works contained in the Manual, and let us see what is practicable for our Conference. If the patronage be too difficult if the Holy Family be too complicated, let us then form a library. If the taste for reading be not very much diffused amongst the people, let us at least give books of instruction and piety, and books for Mass. If, on the contrary, they are a reading people, and if the readings are only too frequently unchristian, let us endeavour to distribute, besides Christian *almanacks*, and *short readings*, those numerous books of amusement which the *Bulletin* recommends from time to time, and which it would be well to place in the hands of persons who have a taste for reading. In a word, under one form or other, let us try to increase the sphere of activity of our Conference, and not allow it to languish.

I shall conclude this letter, Sir and dear Brother, by a point of detail, which must be of wide-spread importance; I mean the distribution of the *Bulletin* and the *Manual of the Society*.

You know why the *Bulletin*[e] was undertaken ; it was for the purpose of supplying the Conferences with news of each other, and of collecting in a monthly account, the most in-

structive and interesting facts contained in each report; it was also for the purpose of keeping up the common spirit of the Society by advice which recalls and explains our traditions. The *Manual*, now forming two parts which may be separated at will, contains, besides the Rules explained, Briefs of Indulgences granted to the Society, Instructions for the formation of Conferences, Prayers for use of the Society and particularly the Offices of Saint Vincent de Paul. There are also to be found in it extracts from the principal circulars and addresses of the Presidents-General.

The *Bulletin* and the *Manual* are, consequently, two works most essential to the Conferences and their members. It is important that they should read and consult them. It is necessary for the old members, in order that they may not forget the spirit of the Society, and it is necessary for the new members, that they may learn to know them. And still the Council-General remarks that the distribution of the *Bulletin* and the *Manual* is not in proportion to the increase of the Conferences; there are even some where they are unknown, and there must result from this a slackening of zeal, and in the long run a deviation from the spirit and traditions of our Society. I call your whole attention to this point, in order that in each Conference the Bulletin may be read, at least the part containing the general

recommendation; that those of the members who can do so may subscribe to it; and that the Manual may be in the hands of all our Brothers.

Be assured, etc.

AD. BAUDON.

Paris, Ist January 1877.

Sir and dear Brother,

It is laid down in our Rule, and it has been always understood amongst us, that in uniting together to serve our masters the poor, as Saint Vincent de Paul expresses it, our object is not only to assuage material misery, a very laudable purpose in itself, but to aspire above all, through the practice of the most sublime of virtues — Charity — to render ourselves better and more fervent Christians, and to make our poor enter on the same path, if we have the happiness of thriving in it.

Now, how can this two-fold object be attained, unless by raising the spiritual level in our Conferences, that is, by increasing our faith, our pious sentiments, and thereby approximating the ideal presented to us by all the Saints honoured by the Church, and especially by our holy Patron?

All exercise of piety, it is true, is free and optional; nothing is done through constraint, even through spiritual constraint, if I may use that

term, for there exists no vow or conscientious obligation. Our Society imposes on us no duty, no practice, beyond that prescribed by the Church; but through the beneficent virtue of example, through the happy contagion of good it is beyond all doubt, that it possesses a real efficacy in advancing us in the ways of Christian perfection.

Let us just reflect on what takes place in our Conferences. In holding their meetings it might not have appeared evidently, *necessary* even to Christians, to open them by prayer. Many Christian assemblies do not employ it : and, at the outset of our Work, very few followed that practice. And yet, our Rule prescribes that our meetings are to be opened by prayer, a short, it is true, but fervent prayer, and this direction alone affixes a quite special and Christian stamp to our sittings.

After the prayer comes a pious reading, and here our Work leads us to take a more decisive step in Christian exercises. Nothing is more recommended by the most approved writers in the Church than pious reading : there is nothing more necessary to maintain faith, to enkindle fervour, to banish thoughts of discouragement, to dissipate doubts, alas! so common in our days of indifference and impiety, and unfortunately there is nothing more neglected by many, even very sincere Christians. There is nothing from which exemption is more frequently claimed on the most frivoulous pretexts, and the practice of which, we are bound to confess, is more lost

sight of in our time. In requiring this reading, so short but so useful, our Rule causes us to adopt one of the most certain regulations of the Christian life, and, it is to be hoped, that many amongst us, not to say all, after having seriously listened to the pious reading at the Conference, will, in consequence, take up the laudable practice in private, and perhaps spread it in their families.

Thus again, all our brothers are regular Christians, who perform their Paschal duty with exactness and faith. But without imposing anything additional, our Society proposes more to its members. By the four Masses it causes to be celebrated every year, to which the liberality of the Sovereign Pontiff has attached plenary indulgences on various conditions, but especially on that of Communion, the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul accustom their members to come closer to that burning fire, the Holy Eucharist, from which no one ever keeps away without enfeebling his spiritual strength and love for God. Hence, every zealous Conference must, I am sure, be rejoiced to have members, who before joining its ranks, carried out the strict rule of Paschal Communion, but who now receive the sacred body of our Lord on the feasts of the Society at least, and perhaps on all the great festivals of the Church; and, it is beyond doubt, that other members, more anxious to follow thoroughly the promptings of their zeal, arrive at the practice of frequent, if not daily, Communion.

And finally, are there not in the world many men exact in the most indispensable observances, but, who are seldom present at a sermon, and are completely deprived of the grace of Retreats? Again our Society does not impose this practice as an obligation; but to how many of its members has it not rendered it familiar through the Annual Retreats to which it invites us, and which ought to be for us an occasion for renewing christian life?

Our Society has therefore done much — and this is one of the reasons that should render it more dear to us — to develop in us the practical spirit of devotion.

Now, what happens? In becoming more fervent in the pursuit of pious exercises, have we deserted the service of the poor? No, no, quite the contrary; it is a matter of fact that such of our members as are most assiduous in prayer, in approaching the Holy Table, are the most earnest in visiting their poor, in devoting attention to their Apprentices, and in attending to the Holy Families. The fire of the love of God which burns in their hearts, and which they labour to keep always alive there, far from turning them away from the common and material cares to be expended on the sick and poor, causes these cares to be more ardently loved by them, because they discern, under the rude and frequently repulsive exterior of the needy, the suffering member of Jesus Christ.

And as to the souls which these poor bodies

cover and which are, for the most part, afflicted by so many diseases, how they love and esteem them? How they find in their defects, in their vices, in their defilement, a fresh occasion for devoting themselves to them, for labouring to heal them, to regenerate them ! Some one says to them, these men, these women, these children are poor through their own fault, attempts have been often and often made to draw them from their misery and they have invariably fallen into it again; but this does not dishearten them, and they try again, once, ten times, or a hundred times, and they sometimes accompany the measures they take with so many prayers, so many acts of penance, that they succeed where others have failed, and have the satisfaction of bringing back to the fold of the Divine Master, the stray sheep which up to then were regarded as lost.

Hence the raising of the christian level in our Conferences is a fact at which we must rejoice, whenever it presents itself to us, and one for which we should incessantly labour.

But how shall we contribute towards this raising of the christian level in our Society? Will it be effected through the multiplication of our pious exercises, by new forms of procedure to be adopted in our Conferences? We ought, in my opinion, to be on our guard against such ideas, and far from altering in our body, what has been attended with great success we have but one thing to do, that is, to preserve in

all simplicity in what we have done, and what our rule recommends, but to endeavour to carry it out with more care and punctuality.

Thus, we need not add to the length of our prayers, at the beginning and close of our meetings ; we do not require to devote more time to our pious readings ; let us only try to be more exact than heretofore, perhaps, in these exercises. If we have been in the unfortunate habit of arriving at the meeting when prayer and lecture are over, let us make an effort to be as punctual as possible in future, and above all, not to leave before the concluding prayer, as is sometimes done by some not over scrupulous members, who attend the meeting merely for the purpose of getting their orders, and who take their departure immediately afterwards.

If the lecture is gone through in a somewhat routine fashion, let us direct our energies to the correction of this fault, and, to effect it, let us endeavour to render the lecture more interesting, by varying the subject of it, by selecting it from new books, or by taking from among the chief christian publications and especially those of the Society, such passages as are best suited to the wants of the Conference. Let us seek, once the reading is over, and if the meeting has not too much business on hand to make a resume of the most salient points, in order to see wether some usefue application may not be made of them for all this will be a source of activity for the meetings, of interest as regards the poor, and of progress towards good.

And again, Sir and dear brother, I do not in the least intend to ask that the number of the Feasts of the Society, of the Masses to which it invites us, or of the Retreats which it opens to us, should be increased; though, of course, my desire would be to see these common throughout all the Conferences. What I venture to request, as a progressive step very desirable from many points of view, is, that the Masses of the Society and the General Meetings, which follow them should be attended as matters of serious importance. On this subject many complaints and lamentations have been made to me. I have been written and spoken to especially in reference to the facility with which members dispense themselves from coming to our Feasts, regarding them undoubtedly as Works of supererogation, and consequently there is not sufficient prayer for the Society, for its progress for its living members, for those whom it has the misfortune to lose every day; and if these complaints are well founded, I conjure you all, in the most impressive way, to put forth all your efforts to prevent a recurrence of these things in future.

This punctual and intelligent observance of the rule will, therefore, be a valuable means of constantly raising the level of the christian spirit amongst us. But what will also powerfully contribute to this object, is the introduction into your Conference of a large and truly Catholic spirit. This will be a very efficacious m dium of

attaining the proposed end. I shall explain myself in a few words.

It is, unquestionably, an excellent thing that every brother should love his Conference; it is still better if he loves his Conference and the entire Society, and this enlarging of the feelings and affections cannot but promote the progress of the Conferences in which this spirit is developed; but would it not be perfection if each one loved his Conference, the Society, and all the charitable or christian Works which cooperate in developing the Church. Would it not be so, if each member, instead of limiting his horizon to the visitation and relief of some poor persons, extended it to all the greatest interests of faith — if he rejoiced in all the conquests and all the conversions achieved by religion, if he sympathized with its sorrows, and lived that truly Catholic life which makes a good christian, from one end of the earth to the other, exult or be afflicted at the sight of the triumphs, or of the trials of the immaculate Spouse of Christ? For then one would impart into the most insignificant Works, into the most minute details large, generous, and fruitful views; instead of looking at the petty and unfortunately personal, local, or narrow sides of questions, one would view them through the comprehensive ideas of faith, and become more and more accustomed to see in good nothing but the good itself, in the Works only the Works themselves, and to root out from one-

self by incessant labour whatever savoured of personal interest, selfishness and cold egotism.

The Christian spirit, on being elevated in our soul will consequently vivify the Conferences themselves; but what a vivifying influence will it not, thereby, impart to our Works and to our poor — the object of it! If a Conference is cold, composed of timid and hesitating Christians, it will never relieve its poor except with a constant anxiety about failing funds, and getting into debt. It will be brought to a standstill before the slightest obstacle that may present itself in the visitations of the poor, in the patronage of children, in the library; and it will become dried up through this very timidity. But, on the other hand, let this Conference, without more funds or a larger staff, comprise ardent Christians, endowed with a generous and exalted spirit, and immediately the state of things will be altered. There will be no longer any fear of doing too much; no longer any doubt except as to not doing enough. If there is no money, a scheme will be devised to procure it, and the members will begin by drawing on their own pockets, even though it should cost them meritorious sacrifices and real privations; this done, they will courageously commence to solicit the alms of others. In their intercourse with the poor they will not be disconcerted by the numerous checks they meet with, and they will prosecute with perseverance the siege of their souls, in order to subject them to truth and God, after having freed them from the vices and pre-

judices which alienated them from that allegiance. In their conduct towards children, who are often so unsteady and so easily led away through their very giddiness, they will not be put out, if they do not at once convert them into serious and very christian beings; but they will devote themselves in such a way to these children, they will return so amiably to the charge, that at length their intractable natures will yield, their rebellious characters will assume form, and the love of God will penetrate into these souls which are made for Him, and which it is so good to bring back to Him. In a word into all the other Works, Libraries, Holy Families, Christian Doctrine, there will be infused a fresh sap, a vigorous spirit, and through that fact alone that one is a *Catholic* in the full sense of the word, in the entire extent of the expression, shall one be a member of Saint Vincent de Paul, a model man useful in all things, in small as well as great.

But then, to what extent shall not our poor, our children, our *protegés* see the Christian level raised in their own souls? We often lament that families, after having been relieved by us for a length of time, are as far removed as ever from sentiments of piety and faith. But the active Conferences, such as I have been describing - Conferences which I would desire so much to see multiplied, will in the long run make their poor, or their working men more seriously Christian; they will develop in their hearts, hitherto cold and insensible, that love of

God, which it is so consoling to find amongst the disinherited of this world, and which stamps upon their misery a character of dignity so remarkable and interesting; they will restore amongst us, where they have disappeared, those classes of generous Catholics who think before everything, of God, of their soul, of eternity, who love the Church as their dear Mother, and who set about bringing back to her, all those who have strayed from her, and upon whom they can exert any influence. Thus, between the visitor and the visited, between the members and their *protégés*, there will be established a community of faith — a kind of spiritual kindred, which will be valuable to all; to our members, because it will reanimate in them attachment to our Work, which procures for them these sweet delights of charity; to our poor above all, because it will bring them more relief and consolations than could be bestowed by the richest alms; and, at least within the circle of our Works, the ideal of Catholic life will be held in honour and re-established.

Accept, etc.,

AD. BAUDON,
President-General.

10th December, 1892.

Gentlemen and dear Brothers,

Just at this period last year I went with you into the question of how the Society of St. Vincent de Paul could best respond to the call which had been made to it to further the generous intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII, in favour of the destitute and the workers. It seemed to us then that the best means of giving our help to that huge work, called the solution of the social question, was to develop and multiply those modest but eminently useful institutions which are known by the name patronages, and by this means to work on a larger scale for the building up of the moral character of young workers. At the same time we requested you in the name of the Council-General to set up more Holy Families, and pious and charitable associations of the kind which afford our Brothers opportunities for coming into touch with the workers and conveying to them in familiar language the essential truths of religion.

These two works are not by any means the only ones through which we may hope to acquire an influence among families of the working class. There is another about which I propose to speak to you to-day. It is that of our *marriage committees* which have increased in importance during the past few years, but

which have not yet become sufficiently numerous, and in our opinion confine their action within too narrow limits.

The Council-General are not overlooking the fact that in a larger number of the smaller towns, the Conferences intervene directly in the cases of a certain number of marriages, but, in the absence of a special committee for the purpose, the extent of this intervention is necessarily limited. A member not having been entrusted with a mission to devote himself specially, to this class of case, all he attempts is to facilitate marriages in a few of the most interesting or most unhappy of the irregularly formed unions which present themselves. but no direct attack is made on the evil of concubinage, and only a very imperfect measure of assistance is offered to the workers in whose cases obstacles of various kinds frequently render the realization of marriage a matter of difficulty.

In France, the law of the 10th December, 1850, dealing with marriages among the poor (and this description has for a long time past been considered as appliying to all persons working for daily wages), entrusted to the state officials concerned the duty of securing the documents required for the marriages of those who cannot procure them at their own expense. Everyone knows, however, that this legal provision is a dead letter, and that most municipal officers, if not all, content themselves with making known to the parties the papers which

ought to be furnished without taking any steps to procure them. This attempt towards progress would, therefore, like so many others, have been negative in result, if the charitable Society of St. Francis Regis, and, after it, our own marriage committees, had not come forward to place themselves at the service of the poor, and so make up for the inertia of the municipal authorities. Our committees have in this way become the helpers of the state officials, and in certain big towns which I could name, the officials entrusted with this duty generously send to the committees all workers and poor people who thus become the care of our Brothers, with the result that their mission extends more every day.

When we see the services rendered to the workers by some committees, we are led to regret all the more that similar bodies are not every where established, and that some of the large towns, where the conferences include many men familiar with legal procedure, do not yet possess marriage committees. It may be objected that in those places the evil of concubinage is not present to any extent. It would be easy to answer to this that the regularising of unlawful unions is neither the only object, as there is too much inclination to believe, nor even the principal object of our committees. The latter have been set up with a more general aim, that of facilitating marriage among the poor as a body. The period has passed when the young people of a district remained atta-

ched to the soil from which they sprung, living at home with their parents, so that when the time came for establishing a separate home they were able to procure, in their own neighbourhood and without any difficulty, the documentary evidence necessary for the celebration of marriage. Nowadays, as a result of the extension of travelling facilities, the wealthy districts where works abound, and particularly the towns, attract workers who flock to them from the poorer districts of the country and also from abroad. These immigrants soon lose touch with the district from which they have come, especially if their parents are dead; and very often prolonged and patient efforts are necessary to establish paternity and procure the evidence from the district of origin. The interested parties would never be able to do this without help. How many irregular unions have been the result merely of efforts of this kind having proved fruitless.

We can see from this what a very big part our committees have to take in keeping in honour the sacrament of marriage and the christion constitution of the family among the working population, more and more drifting towords disorder, and in procuring the benefits of Baptism and First Holy Communion for the children born of irregular unions. Our committees have also another mission; to call the attention of the legislators to the defects in our laws, and to point out, with the authority given them by the assiduous practice of their work, and a

great love for the disinherited of this world, the reforms to be introduced, particularly on the point touching the consent of parents to the marriage of persons who have attained their majority (1). I have heard it said our venerated President-General, M. Gossin, and the Society of St. Francis Regis, had largely assisted in securing for the poor the benefit of the law of 1850. Our Brothers in the committees are not strangers to the improvements in our laws which those who recognise the necessity for making the formalities preceding marriage easier and less costly desire to see introduced.

It have tried, my dear Brothers, to show you the importance from the social point of view of the work which our marriage committees are accomplishing. I would like now to demonstrate to you how this work could be developed so as to exercise a more extensive and efficacious influence among its clients than it has hitherto done. Up to the present, indeed, either through being insufficiently staffed, perhaps also from the effect of a certain bureaucratic tendency, most of our committees have limited their efforts to the most routine part of their task, and have considered their mission accomplished when they have procured the justification of the nuptial blessing. It should, however, be possible to preserve relations with the newly wedded, in whose marriages they have

(1) Legislation on this point has been amended by a law of the 20th June, 1896.

interested themselves, and to hold them under a certain watchful care. This may be difficult in big cities where working people make so many changes in their places of residence and work, but there is much less difficutly in towns of a smaller size. But to acquire influence among their clients, the Committees must first of all know them. How often does it not happen that the woman presents herself alone at the office with the excuse, true or false, that her intended husband is prevented by his work from attending, and that the marriage is solemnised without the members of the committee having seen or spoken to the man. In our opinion it is well to require that the man shall accompany his intended wife on the occasion of at least one of her visits to the committee.

We read in the reports that the members of some committees follow the custom of acting as witnesses to the contracting parties. What a beautiful practice, and how desirable it would be to see it become general. Is not acting as witness to the marriage and nuptial blessing the best method of showing our clients, the workers, the great importance we attach to the Sacrament? And surely to have acted in this honoured capacity towards them must be the best posible means of making them our friends. We would like, therefore, to see the personnel of our committees so strong in numbers as to include enough men of good will to enable our Brothers, in the case of every couple presenting

themselves, to offer to act as witnesses at the Mayor's office and especially at the Church. Experience shows that this offer is nearly always accepted with pleasure; those for whom the marriage is in the nature of reparation for a fault like to have it celebrated discreetly, while the others are often glad to avoid the expense which is always entailed by the obligation of providing refreshments for the friends who usually act as witnesses. As a final reason for helping couples in this way, it may be pointed out that by doing so our Brothers will be able to counter any inclination which may be shown after leaving the mayor's office to turn away from the road to the Church.

The celebration of the marriage has been accomplished, and our Brothers have presented to the newly wedded pair the usual gift together with a copy of our *Family Souvenir*, that charming little booklet which married people of all classes, from the members of the highest aristocracy to persons of the most modest circumstances are happy to receive. Is all now finished and must we resign ourselves to never seeing again those to whom we have given such useful service during a few days? On the contrary, the time has come when we must study how to preserve the influence which we have justly acquired. By the Rule of the Society of St. Francis Regis, persons who have been married through the efforts of the Society are to assist at a monthly Mass specially celebrated for them. This would be an excellent

custom, and it would only be necessary to imitate it, if the persons who have been married fulfilled the obligations, but only a very small number remain faithful to it. So recourse must be had to other means. To attain the end in view we can do nothing better than to exhort the newly wedded to join our Holy Families, wherever these have been established, and, where there is no Holy Family, to have the husband and wife enrolled in the different pious and charitable associations which are to be found in the Parishes, also, wherever possible, to introduce the man to the meetings of the fathers of families, which are held in our Patronages, the woman to one of the Confraternities of Christian Mothers. Having done all this, we will have accomplished only a part of our task. For, just as we often continue to call upon the families to whom we have acted as visitors after the need for relieving them has ceased, in the same way we should pay a visit in December or January of each year to the couples whose marriages we have been instrumental in bringing about, and take the opportunity of presenting them with a little gift, such as one of our almanacs or a volume of the *Short Readings*. These visits are particularly useful when the time is approaching for the children to be sent to a school or catechism class, and later on to a Patronage.

I do not aspire, my dear Brothers, to put before you to-day a complete programme for your committees. Institutions which are to

endure cannot be improvised. But we would like to think that by having placed the subjects as we have done before this meeting, we had succeeded in inspiring the marriage committees with the desire of entering into our views and extending the scope of their mission, for the greater good of those who come to them for help. I need hardly say that the Council-General will warmly welcome every new idea whenever it appears to be in agreement with the objects of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Let us strive from now on to organize marriage committees wherever they are still lacking, and let us do this in such a way that the committees will be well staffed and active. Let us beware of the tendency of so many minds which carries them in the direction of wishing to do everything themselves. Such a system may succeed in the region of officialdom, but is fatal to institutions which must aim at exterior action. No doubt, these suggested efforts present themselves as an addition to many other labours, but how many men there are, even among Christians, who are given up to idleness and childish occupations. We venture to express the hope, that they will find in the path into which we have tried to lead them, results as useful to the Society as they are agreeable to God.

A. PAGES.

28th April, 1895.

Gentlemen and dear Brothers,

When we reflect on the causes which for the past sixty-two years have saved the Society of St. Vincent de Paul from the dislike of the faithful and the inconstancy of its own Members, when we seek for the motives of its extension which outward events and the distrust of Governments may, indeed, check, but do not succeed in putting a stop to, we are led to admit that safety and — why not say it here? — success have come to us by means of our humility, and the care we have everywhere taken not to court congratulations or praises, and to keep ourselves in the background as much as possible, so as to attribute to Almighty God all the merit of the few good works we have succeeded in doing. And it happened, occasionally, that we needed some firmness to withstand certain inducements, and that strong current which inclines the men of the present day to seek for support in the publicity of the newspapers.

Do we continue to observe with the same fidelity this humility, which was so well practised by the Founders of our Society, and by its first Members? Has there not gradually arisen a certain tendency to cast it aside? For instance, in one place we see a Brother who, not being sufficiently impressed with the intentions of our Society, and adopting the customs of the world, writes on his visiting cards the office he holds in our Society. Elsewhere we

are asked to announce, through the medium of the *Bulletin*, that some Members of the Society have received, some a decoration, others a distinction of nobility : we hope that those Brothers will kindly spare us, henceforward, the pain of replying to these suggestions by a direct refusal. In other instances, it is the Reports which dwell complacently at length on this subject. We are glad, assuredly, to hear that the Sovereign Pontiff or the Governments have recognised the merits of our Brothers, but what we cannot admit is that our *Bulletin or* Reports, intended to be the annals of Charity should be used as a means of gratifying our self-love.

Another thing which still threatens the ruin of our traditions for humility and simplicity is the habit, becoming more general, of pronouncing discourses on behalf of the Conferences over the graves of our deceased Brothers. Whenever we hear of this abuse, we hasten to protest against it, but without succeeding in making ourselves sufficiently heard. Shall we then be obliged to write on the first page of the *Bulletin* a positive prohibition to speak thus in public in the name of the Society? No doubt our Brothers are afraid of failing in the respect due to the family of the deceased Member in observing silence; they must, however, have the courage to be above this consideration; the family will not wonder at our reticence if it knows the customs of our Society; later on, when the right time comes for speaking of the deceased

Member, we shall, without being exposed to cherish any secret thought of personal praise in this oration, recall in a just measure the services rendered to the cause of religion and of charity. It has sometimes happened, however, that Bishops have ascended the pulpit, and in the presence of the mortal remains of one of our Brothers, have preached the panegyric of his zeal and his merits; we did not think ourselves free to dispense ourselves from speaking of it, and from reproducing the discourses of prelates, because the words of a bishop are truly an instruction and should always be brought prominently forward; it is also customary to announce in the *Bulletin* in a few lines the death of the Members of the Council-General, but these communications, discreetly meant for our Brothers, have nothing in common with the funeral orations delivered on behalf of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul over the graves of deceased Members, for whose soul the smallest prayer would be a hundred times of more advantage.

There is a second danger to which the growing extension of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul exposes us, namely, the diminution of the spirit of reciprocal kindness and cordiality which constituted the attraction of our first reunions. It frequently happens that a Conference is founded without any of its Members having formerly belonged to the Society, and without being well informed of its origin and object. The Society appears then to those

new Brothers no longer as simply an assemblage of men, animated with the sympathy and affection which similatarity of feelings and tastes gives us, a sympathy and affection which caused people to say of the early Christians « See how they love one another», but as a vast administrative organization. Hence, we now find in the correspondence, at one time, the forms of expression which public officials use among themselves, with cold politeness and studied tone; at other times, the commercial or business style ; but we seek in vain for a word from the heart. Is it thus that Christians should inform each other of their good works ! Oh ! how different they are, alike in thought and expression, from those friendly and affectionate communications which were exchanged between our early Members! The Manual recommends us to collect our thoughts for a moment before opening the door of the dwellings of our poor, and to ask Almighty God to bless our charitable ministrations. In like manner, let us, my dear Brothers, take care when we write to one another, to reflect for a moment on the communications we are about to exchange with one another. Let us leave aside those commonplace and conventional forms of expression, so as to keep that simple and friendly style in our letters of which our Founders set us, the example. On the day on which we should adopt new methods of procedure and a formal tone, a change would be wrought in the Society as deplorable as it would be dangerous. The cold-

ness of our expressions would soon be equalled by the coldness of our feelings.

What would our early members say if they attended a meeting of one of those Conferences where the members come and take their places beside one another without exchanging the slightest friendly salutation, without showing the least civility; and if they saw two Christians who the day before were seated beside each other at one of our reunions, meeting in the street and turning away their head with an air of indifference? Doubtless, people will say familiarity has its dangers, and that a certain reserve is proper. I do not deny this fact; but is it, then, so very difficult to combine Christian prudence, which should never forsake us, with the care of behaving graciously and kindly in everything?

« Cordiality », said St. Vincent de Paul, « is a joyfulness we feel in our heart when we see a person we love; it is gushing of the heart by which we show we are glad to be with a brother ; it is a fruit of Divine Love united with that of our neighbour. If charity were a red apple, cordiality would be the colour of it. »

By the very fact of the extension of our Society it happens that the ties of cordiality and intimacy have been rather relaxed among us; many Conferences are injured by the coldness the members evince towards one another but this indifference is felt above all in the relations between one Conference to another. No doubt, in a large city like Paris, it is hard for Conferences situated

at long distances from one another to become acquainted and keep up a constant intercourse, but it should be otherwise in the case of Conferences situated in the same district, which ought to try to have frequent intercourse with one another, and to become more united by the bonds of charity. In that way their scope and field of action will become wider. We should no longer see the spirit of routine creeping gradually into Conferences belonging sometimes to the wealthiest quarters, which remain in a dangerous isolation ; their members in ignorance of what is taking place in the midst of the Society. We should also come to our General Meetings, which are too poorly attended, to strengthen our feelings of affection and of mutual sympathy; it is the expression of those sentiments that will give rise to the generous impulses which prepare the way for the extension of our beloved Society. which has still a vast field to bring under cultivation, because coldness and indifference are of necessity barren.

Cordiality is the outward manifestation of love of our neighbour; when cordiality is absent it is to be feared that its principle is likewise lacking. What is the evil that is eating into modern society? It is selfishness, the inevitable companion of the search after comfort and pleasure. Let us, my dear Brothers, escape the general contagion; I wish I could affirm that such is the case, but I am not without having some doubts on this subject. Let us have, at least, the merit of trying to struggle against this

pernicious influence. In the efforts we make to solve the social question we clash sometimes with the too often unreasonable demands of the working man, but we also find an obstacle in the selfishness of the rich. We have, my dear Brother, an important role to fill in this great work of peace-making in which Leo XIII invites all well-disposed men to take part, but let us be well convinced that, in order to succeed with the working man, we must begin by overcoming ourselves. In order to make our works of pacification and of mutual sacrifices acceptable, we must preach by example. But how far we are, alas! ourselves, from having the state of mind that we would wish to commmunicate to our fellow-men! What a painful spectacle the world in the midst of which we live presents to us in its blind pursuit of earthly enjoyments and comfort, in those selfish calculations where it shows nothing but indifference and contempt for its neighbour! Oh! how much we need to improve ourselves, and to establish a league of mutual confidence and attachment between ourselves before descending into this arena of burning competition!

« Human Society is founded, » wrote a certain moralist, a short time ago, « on the mutual giving or the self-sacrifice of one man to another, or of each man to all men, and sacrifice is the essence of every true society. This is what we have forgotten for the past century, and if we must go again to school, it is to learn this fact over again. A well-bred man

is one who puts himself to inconvenience, or who restrains himself in order to serve others. » You will allow me to change, somewhat, this quotation, as I am not obliged to consider here what constitutes a « wellbred man », and to tell you that the Brother of St. Vincent de Paul who is truly worthy of the name, is he who sacrifices and devotes himself for others, and it is not a single act of self-sacrifice and devotedness that is expected from us, but the constant self-denial and devotedness that have become a habit with us. That should be, my dear Brothers, the only way in which we ought to try to distinguish ourselves from those around us, looking for no other reward here below than the satisfaction of having fulfilled our duty as Christians, and having honoured our Faith.

A. Pages.

16th April, 1899.

Gentlemen and dear Brothers,

When it was the duty of Messrs. Bailly and Gossin to inform our predecessors of the progress and the interests of the Society, their custom was to send out general notices in the form of circular letters and these instructions in which the object and the character of the Society of

St. Vincent de Paul are so clearly explained, have become the justly authorised exposition of our Rule.

By degrees, under the long and fruitful presidency of my revered prodecessor, it became an established custom to take the opportunity afforded by our general meetings to deal with those questions ,and the addresses published in the *Bulletin* have taken the place of the circular letters.

I would like to-day to speak with you for a few moments concerning Conferences established in colleges and other educational estabilshments. From the beginning the « Council of Direction », which soon became the « Council-General », showed how much it valued the establishment of those Conferences. One of its most distinguished Members, Augustin Cochin, was appointed to draw up a special instruction under the title of « Advice on the Formation of Conferences in Houses of Education. »

By degrees those Conferences have been multiplied, and more than one diocese could be cited where all the houses of Christian education of any importance are provided with them. No person any longer denies, at least in principle, the services that a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul is calculated to render as the complement of the education given in colleges, and gradually the opposition remaining seems likely to give way.

It is not from the desire I have to see these obstacles disappear that I am going to speak to you to-day. I am supposing that junior Seminaries and Catholic Colleges are all provided with Conferences, and I ask myself whether, judging by what we learn here to-day, the results obtained will be worthy of the end in view, and of our own hopes.

In some respects I will answer : yes. The good influence exercised by the Conferences on the pupils belonging to them cannot be denied. Some few abuses, no doubt, may have crept into their working. For instance, the selection of candidates for admission as members may not have been made as carefully as we could wish, and a few heedless boys have been able to abuse the privilege of going out, so as to enjoy an amount of liberty not intended. In other places it is the masters appointed to accompany the pupils who have not been, perhaps, as prudent and careful as they ought to be, and blame was thrown on the Conference itself for the shortcomings of its members or of its directors ; but, beyond these exceptions, which are, besides, very rare, all masters who have to do with youths agree in admitting that a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul is of invaluable help in the great work of education; that it contributes greatly to the progress of the Faith, the safeguarding of morals, the training of minds, and also the rectitude of judgment; *Super exaltat misericordia judicium*, wrote the Apostle St. James.

However, do the Conferences in colleges and junior Seminaries bear all the fruit we should be entitled to expect from them, in addition to the aid they give to education, and the piety which they invite their members to practise? How does it happen that such a large number of our juvenile « Aspirants », instead of getting themselves admitted into the Conferences in full working order, go away from us when they leave college? It would naturally be expected, that after having been zealous members in the midst of their fellow-students giving their heart, with all its charitable emotions to the poor, they would look forward joyfully to the time when they could enter the large Conferences. There is no lack of Conferences for young men in the towns to which they frequently repair to complete their studies, university towns especially, where they would certainly form desirable friendships; how then does it happen that many go astray in this passage from the college to their life as university students, even without any other associations gaining them?

This « flight » or « leakage », as our English and American Brothers say in their practical way of speaking, arises from various causes, a few of which we have already looked into. We have on former occasions warmly urged our Brothers in large towns or cities to found, side by side, with the parochial Conferences, Conferences for young men, which the latter may enter during their transition between

the college Conferences and those formed of Brothers of mature age, and thus remove difficulties arising from diversity of habits and want of agreement in disposition. That done, we shall meet with other obstacles still on our way.

Every institution has its own methods and discipline. The *personnel* of the masters charged with education varies according to their intellectual and moral cast, and also according to the nature of the country, the character of its inhabitants, and its prevailing customs. In some institutions there are no traditions, properly speaking; one director has ideas differing from those of his predecessor in office, and sometimes discontinues things which had been established by his predecessor. In order to avoid mixing up the Society of St. Vincent de Paul with matters of discipline, which are very delicate, the Council-General has always allowed a wider latitude in the interpretation of our Rule and usages to the directors of Conferences in houses of education, being careful only to direct attention to the principal points of our Rule; but a regrettable diversity is the result of this latitude, and to see the working of some of these little associations an observer, not previously forewarned, could hardly recognise in some of them a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul.

Meanwhile, our Society, is one. The various divisions of which it is formed should contribute to the harmony of its action.

If the Conferences of « Aspirant Members » (that is the name which the Rule gives to college Conferences) are not managed according to the provisions of the Manual, if they despise the traditions of our Society, they cannot be imbued with its spirit : their members form habits which they find very hard to undo later on; they will feel themselves quite at sea in the Conferences in full working order to which they will be admitted, and very often they will only pass through them without taking any interest in them or becoming attached to them.

What then is a College Conference ? It is merely a pious pastime, which each director is to shape to his own fashion, as a relief to the monotony of the studies one would be tempted to think so on seeing the difference between their methods. In vain, then, have the Founders of our Society, left us a Rule, the wisdom of which persons on the best authority have lauded unceasingly for the past sixty years. Many directors think to do better by giving way to the temptation so common, in France especially, of introducing novelties, and of framing a special Rule for their own individual Conferences. In one place the collection is altered to a fixed subscription ; in another the chief fund consists in the product of the fines incurred by the Brothers for infringing the Rules, as if we want to make constraint take the place of the spirit of generosity and of sacrifice. If there is one truth which seems, at the present day, beyond dis-

pute, it is that the visitation of the poor is work most productive of graces of every kind for the youthful college student, as well as for a man. On condition that certain precautions are taken, and that a young man is not taken to houses where he will meet with young girls, this visitation is made without difficulty in the most destitute quarters of our large cities; what then is our astonishment to hear that in such or such a small town the director considered there was danger to morals in this visitation, or that going out was a cause of distraction from study, and that he suppressed the visits to the poor! Others again will make our jevenile Brothers, whose habit it was, in drawing up a report, to write simply a summary of their works, compose dissertations on them, in which affectation and a certain desire to shine will, of necessity, appear. Lastly, others would like to regulate even the smallest details, instead of allowing these young Brothers to take upon themselves, and go through the apprenticeship of « self-government », their attention merely being called, when required, to the recommendations contained in the Manual. How could youthful members, who are thus trained in a manner not in accordance with our traditions, acquire a knowledge and love of a Society of which they have thus caught a glimpse under a false light? The difference they find on going into our large Conferences disconcerts them, and this reason alone, not to speak of the numberless temptations

which arise in their path, would be a hindrance to their perseverance.

Nowadays there is great discussion about the education of the young, from a « social » point of view. In many institutions they try to teach the students of Philosophy the elementary notions of a science which they will afterwards have to study thoroughly, and the principles of which are to serve them as rules in their career in life. It is, to be hoped that from these studies there will spring up, together with a well-regulated plan of living, a generous inclination to contribute to the welfare of society, and to the improvement of the working class. Ah, well! the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has, for a long time, taken its place beside this study of social science; it is not even presumptuous to say that it has preceded it as a practical school of charity, and that perhaps it is destined to outlive it : however, it will remain for it an indispensabe adjunct : *Plenitudo legis dilecto.*

But if the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has thus become, by the grace of God and the happy inspiration of its youthful Founders, the practical school of charity, which has been *extended* through the whole of Christendom, it is of the highest importance to avoid, at the beginning of that teaching by example, faults and errors. It is sometimes said of a pupil that his education has been a failure, because he was badly taught in the beginning. You have also heard it said more than once that it is

more difficult to train a soldier, whether infantry or cavalry, who has received incorrect notions before entering the service, than it is to train one who is totally ignorant of military duty. Forgive me, my dear Brothers, if there is anything trivial in these comparisons, because they express my thoughts so well. An ancient sage, being asked what boys should learn, replied : « What they ought to do when they are men ». The advancement of a Brother of St. Vincent de Paul in his career of charity will often depend on the excellence of the beginning he makes, and on the care taken in guiding aright his first steps.

Do we wish to take for guides the Sovereign Pontiffs and the exhortations which our illustrious Pope Leo XIII, following the example of his august predecessors, has been pleased to address to us so often do we feel a generous ambition to labour by good example for the restoration of Christian society? If so, it is necessary, from the outset, that we should be strongly imbued with the spirit and traditions of the Society to which we have the honour to belong. You have, perhaps, found some of my criticisms a little too severe? My excuse is the earnest desire I feel, with you, to see the Society of St. Vincent de Paul grow at once in extent and in strength. It is not by somewhat incongruous union, but by a complete cohesion, aided by a good system, that we shall acquire

the confidence which should guide us through difficulties, and the energy which will ensure the success of our efforts.

A. PAGES.

14th December, 1907.

Gentlemen and dear Brothers,

At the close of the memorable Diocesan Congress held in Paris in the month of May last, the Coadjutor-Bishop who presided, with an authority and charm equally blended with good-natured firmness, made this remark « And now to work, that is to say, to united action ». Then as a practical conclusion His Grace added : « Let not the Catholics who are united together here separate without forming a resolution to do more and to do it better ».

I have been asking myself, thinking, the matter over in the presence of God, in what way the Society of St. Vincent can increase or improve on its work of the past?

The largest number of the sittings of the Congress had been devoted to the study of religious and social works.

Social works, what are they? What is meant by *social works* ? The expression is very vague, for everyone can define and interpret it to suit his own purpose. Social works, it seems to us, are those which concern our

neighbour from the social point of view, which have for their object to bring him into harmonious relationship with the other members of Society; to procure for him in that Society the place most suited to his qualifications, his means, and the most favourable to his interests. All our works, beginning with the visitation of the poor, are, to a certain extent, social works, since by the poor being brought into contact with the rich, the bonds, which should unite the different classes of Society to one another, are strengthened.

Secretariats. — We have come to a period when the poor consider help more and more as a right. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that we should add to our activities and occupy ourselves with their interests if we wish, at the same time, to win their confidence. Under these circumstances it seems to us that to arrive at this result, we should develop in our Society, Secretariats, where help is given free of charge, known also as Secretariats of the poor, Secretariats of families, the people's Secretariats, and charitable Secretariats. The choice of the name is not a matter of indifference, for the title indicates the direction and character given to the work.

We do not wish to establish what has been called « une maison du peuple », which closely resembles « study circles ». These latter two works are useful and worthy of encouragement, but they are far removed from the object which we have set to ourselves, because

they have in view popular education. Our family secretariat must be a bureau of information to which each one can have recourse with perfect freedom, for any service or information which he may require. It is not sufficient to limit our good offices to the poor whom we visit. The secretariat must welcome anyone who happens to knock at its door and asks its assistance, as is done in the case of Marriage Committees, who ask neither who the person is, nor whence he comes, and who turn no one away with a refusal. Did not our Lord Himself welcome, without distinction, all those who came to Him, publican, Samaritan, or strangers?

Were we to enumerate all the different classes of business which may devolve upon a Secretariat the list would grow too long. The questions most often dealt with, concern employment, admission to charitable organisations, hospices and hospitals, requests for legal assistance, help in securing pensions for retired Army men, old or sick people, the completion of bail bonds, apprenticeship contracts, correspondence with young men on active service, and with military chaplains, inquiries as to children who have left their parents, steps taken to bring about family reconciliations. It has to procure certificates for the celebration of marriages when there is no special Committee in existence for that purpose. It directs destitute persons to night shelters; the sick to dispensaries for tuberculosis or

other ailments. It tries to secure help for those who want to come back to their own country and for victims of accidents arising from their work. The Secretariat of families will also serve a useful purpose by putting within reach of our poor, all these new agencies which present-day charity has placed at their disposal. In short, we would not know where to stop if were necessary to enumerate all that could be done. What we can say in a few words is that everything that comes along must be taken in hand and no case must be dropped without a solution having been sought for and prepared for it.

The Rule is laid down that secretariats do not lend money; if it were etherwise, our brothers woud be assailed by all lazy and indigent people. They must, however, throw all their energies into the work of directing the unfortunate persons to Institutions which can help them, and which exist in great numbers. It is doing no small amount of good to point out to each one, the helping hand which can serve him, taking into consideration, his past, his origin, and his age. It is the same as regards the search for employment. The Secretariat cannot procure such employment directly, but it knows the business houses or the manufactories, which employ clerks working men or working women. By acting as an intermediary between the two, it serves both parties and a mutual confidence is thereby established which is to the interests of all.

The question of a meeting place need never cause trouble. It is easy to solve. In what parish is there not a reading room, vestry, marriage Commmittee room, a school parlour which can be secured free of charge, once or twice a week for an hour? At the start, one or two brothers will suffice, later on, three will be required. Clients will not come in at the beginning, but experience proves that the Secretariat develops gradually and may rise to great importance. Furthermore, our brothers and the clergy will not fail to send to the Secretariat cases involving legal knowledge, or difficult questions whch have been submitted to them.

We are fortunate to be able to point out a model Secretariat which has been in existence in Paris for the last fifteen years, and which has, during the last year received 4,000 clients. That works out, deducting three months' holidays, at 50 visitors at each meeting. Two persons have been able to meet this large demand, thanks to the absolute regularity with which the sittings are held each week.

Such results are well calculated to encourage our brothers; they are far from frightening them. The harvester never complains that the yield is too great, and we can see clearly by the success obtained in this case, that the secretariats supply a need of the present day.

Sometimes, indeed, it happens that abuses arise and that persons who are not in needy circumstances come for advice. Is that a matter for complaint ? We think not ;

for it has been truly said that there are other miseries besides that of poverty, and that they are equally worthy of pity. If we could but see the gratitude of those honest people towards those who have drawn them away from evil influences, and are trying to render their lot less hard, we would feel that they give their hearts in return to the person who gives his to them They get into the habit of coming to entrust their most intimate affairs to our brothers, whom they regard as their friends.

If however, it becomes certain that some of those looking for advice, come designedly to the Secretariat for purposes of economy, and the saving of expense, and that they are not in trouble or genuinely embarrassed, the duty is then, and then only, to send them away. This is what happened to our colleagues in Brussels who for some years had a secretariat. They were obliged to change its name to « The Central Secretariat of Charity' in order to emphasize the charitable character of the work, and to keep away people in comfortable circumstances who were making applications to it.

In Brussels the Secretariat has been a complete success. Our colleagues who had only 50 visitors the first year,, had 4,636 at the end of the fourth year, being an average of from 120 to 130 persons per week.

These two figures demonstrate of themselves that the Secretariats fill a gap.

The same result will follow everywhere, so

long as we have brothers who are both zealous and punctual; we do not ask for learned men or qualified lawyers. It is not necessary to be a lawyer, a notary, or a magistrate, in order to take on this work. Certainly experience and acquired knowledge would be no harm, on the contrary they would be even a great advantage. But even if one were to possess the highest professional qualifications, there is one essential quality needed which towers above all others, and for which there is no substitute. There must be, above all, devotedness and the gift of self. In general the transactions dealt with by the Secretariats travel in the same circle, and if they re-appear under different aspects, they are at bottom, almost always alike.

But you ask how are we to set about getting the secretariat into existence? The expenditure is very trifling, and is limited almost exclusively to the expense of correspondence. A small grant from the Conferences, and a gift from the local Council will suffice at the start. You know, also, that a work has never failed for want of funds. Providence knows how to make provision for it by the most unexpected surprises.

Have I said all that needs to be said, my dear Brothers, in telling you of the enormous services which we can render working or poorer classes in looking after their interests? No, for I have only talked to you about what is on the surface, that which is apparent. Now it is the

moral good which we have particularly in view. It is through this essential quality that the Secretariat links up with the work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, whose charity is not limited to the interests of the body, but aims specially at reaching souls. Consider all our works, you will find in them this double character.

,What a pleasing experience and what a precious reward for our efforts to have taught these unfortunate persons to love and respect the Church, to obey its precepts, to frequent the sacraments, which are the Divine sources and channels of grace. We will lead to God these paralytics who would be incapable of any movement or of any effort to obtain the remedy for the ills of souls and of their bodies.

Such is the true manner of going to the people By deeds, rather than by words, we shall contrive to render efficacious service to them, and without noise shall exercise a healthy influence over them. We shall eradicate many of their prejudices, and heal many moral infirmities. Therein lies a powerful method of propaganda. Why should we not employ it for the benefit of the cause which is dear to us ? The people are bad only through ignorance; it is for us to instruct them, to show them we can sacrifice ourselves for them with absolute disinterestedness.

I read lately in a magazine which treats principally of Catholic activities, that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, ought to get in touch with the existing secretariats and send there the fa-

milies whom they visit. We will do better than to send them to others : we will institute the work within our own organisation, we will entrust it to the activity and intelligence of our own members. May I entertain the hope, my dear Brothers, that you will not be deaf to our appeal? for no one has ever appealed to the members of our Society in vain.

It was after, a retreat given in 1848 by M. l'abbé, Pétetot, that the Society of Saint-Vincent de Paul founded its Marriage Committees. They began in a modest fashion in the Conference of the third *arrondissement*, at the feet of Our Lady of Victories. During the past year they proceeded in setting right in the Diocese of Paris alone, 2,845 unlawful unions. It is true that we had then a remarkable man, a devoted Brother, who set the work going. Shall we not find another to-day, and even several, animated with the same zeal? I am thoroughly convinced that the same success awaits *them*.

What we counsel you to undertake, my dear Brothers, is not a novelty. We find traces of them here, in the reports which reach us from the Provinces, and from abroad. It is largely a question, then, of coordinating and making the work general.

Each secretariat adapts its work to local needs.

At Toulon 137 cases were dealt with in 1906. We know also, that three secretariats

operate in Bordeaux, Others exist in the North, in Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, and Armentieres, and in many other towns.

The reports from abroad are not less convincing, especially that from Geneva, where it is very necessary to maintain the Catholic influence in the midst of a Protestant country In the kingdom of Holland nine towns can be counted where Secretariats exist; in particular, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Groningue, Nimegue.

From the Hague an extraordinary fact is reported to us. A woman had come to the Secretariat to ask that inquiries be made after her daughter who had abandoned her mother, in order to follow a Mahometan. The latter had come to Paris during the International Exhibition, and had since returned to Egypt. The Secretariat entered into correspondence with the Brothers of Alexandria, who discovered the dwelling place of the young girl, and learned also that she had married the Oriental after having converted him to Catholicity. It was owing to the Secretariat that this search was successfully concluded.

We have already referred to the brilliant results achieved by that remarkable Secretariat in Brussels, to which the visitors flock in crowds. The Antwerp Secretariat is holding its own, but regrets that it has so few workers. Tournon and several others towns of Hainault have also their secretariats. In Ghent a thousand cases are dealt with every year. A case

is cited of a young man having been restored to his portion of an inheritance through the Secretariat.

In the United States and Canada the *free* Secretariats are of a peculiar nature.

They serve chiefly as information bureaux for immigrants who want advice and assistance. In New York, Boston, as well as in Quebec and Toronto, a large number of strangers arrive without any means of support. For some, work is procured, money is advanced to others. A certain amount of time elapses before these unfortunate people find employment, and the first wages are paid. During this interval the Secretariat helps these poor people and advances them the sums of money necessary for their subsistence.

In conclusion, my dear Brothers, let us hope that this meeting may mark a definite epoch in the formation of our *secretariats des familles*.

P. CALON.

Paris. 30th April, 1911.

Gentlemen and dear Brothers.

Prayer is an essential want of the human heart. In his weakness man seeks help and support ; be finds them only in Him who is the source of all strength, of all goodness and of all grace. We see this most plainly in public calamities : people who have preserved

the Faith flock to the churches and implore the all-powerful God to turn aside the scourge which menaces them.

Thus it behoves us to repeat without ceasing that piety is the firm base of Christian associations. It is for this reason that our founders ordained that the meetings of Conferences should begin and end with prayer, and that a pious reading should be made before even hearing the minutes; pilgrimages have been organized and retreats arranged, finally our four great annual meetings have been instituted which give us the opportunity of approaching the Holy Table together, and to gain precious indulgences.

In fact of all prayers, most agreeable to God, the most efficacious, the most complete, is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, since it is our Saviour Himself, both Victim and Priest, who prays with and for us. It was these pious sentiments which upheld the souls of our brothers during the terrible events of 1870. One of them President of a Conference in central France, obtained from his Bishop that there should be celebrated every day, in one or other parish of the diocese, a Mass for the intentions of the Church, the Sovereign Pontiff, and for France and for our Society.

When peace was restored, the idea was adopted and spread by the Council General; it decided that every Conference in France as well as abroad, should be invited to enter into this vast crusade of supplications and prayers, and to undertake to have celebrated, every year, a

Mass for the intentions of the Church, the Sovereign Pontiff, our Society, adding, as the fourth intention, its own Country.

This appeal was heard. On 1st of January 1872 we read in the Bulletin that sixteen Conferences in Paris had their names entered for an annual Mass. In February the number rose to 44. The movement, so well launched, was not to stop. In March, 84 Conferences had given their adhesion, and the editor of the Bulletin wrote, that if this enthusiam continued, the Holy Sacrifice would soon be offered every day of the year through the efforts of our Conferences for the four intentions already mentioned.

Foreign countries rivalled in zeal our brothers of France; Belgium led the way, and announced that each one of the Conferences in the country, on the day of Perpetual Adoration, in the parish, would cause to be celebrated a Mass for the intentions of the Church, the Holy Father, Belgium, and of our Society.

This great example found imitation, and we reported in 1873, the adhesion of numerous Conferences, at Quebec, Smyrna, Buenos Ayres, Lisbon, Athens, Fribourg, in Italy, in Holland, in Brazil. I cannot mention all. In the year 1874, that is to say after two years, most days of every month were occupied, some, indeed, had several masses.

What a magnificent result! One can say that, in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, as well in old days as now, it suffices to formu-

late a desire, a thought, to suggest a good action, in order to find adherents full of enthusiasm and generosity. These daily Masses have thus continued for forty years, and we read in the last copies of the Bulletin (which doubtless you may not have sufficiently noticed) that not a single day, so to speak, there is during the course of each year when this pious custom is not carried out.

Perhaps we must look to these incessant supplications for the secret of the manifest protection which Divine Providence has deigned to accord to our Society by encouraging its efforts. We must therefore use every effort to make ourselves more and more worthy of such favours.

Some amongst you, my dear Brothers, might imagine that the end having been attained, we should cry halt. We do not agree with this advice, for in the affairs of Charity it is never allowable to stop, the word of command should be « ever forward, ever better ». If you will glance your eyes on these monthly lists it will be easy for you to see how few are the Conferences inscribed in comparison with the whole of our Society — after all we are not surprised at so many abstentions, most of our Conferences are not aware of this conspiracy of prayer, they have never heard it spoken of, it is the same with our new Conferences, which, every year, increase our numbers by two hundred to two hundred and fifty new centres of Charity.

It is our Presidents of Councils, Superior, Central, and Particular who should make known these collective Masses, explain their end and see to their celebration, when the decision has been taken and the day fixed by the Conferences.. They must, in addition, assure themselves every year that the promised Masses are exactly celebrated, for we have reason to believe that a certain falling off has lately become apparent. We hope the Presidents of the several Councils will make a point of acquitting themselves of this double duty. We ask them to insert in their annual report, a special mention about the celebration of these Masses to which we attach great importance both for the prosperity of our works and our own salvation. They will only have to reply to the question printed at the head of the statistics peculiar to each Conference, which is worded thus, « What is the day fixed for the Annual Mass » ?

Prayer in common is so powerful, it pierces the clouds say the sacred books. How great then will be the force of our invocations, starting thus from all parts of the globe!

If any Conferences experience a difficulty in determining the day of their Annual Mass, they might imitate Belgium and adopt the day of Perpetual Adoration in the parish. —Others have chosen the feast day of the Patron Saint of the church or district. It might be well to select the date of aggregation of the

Conference, or for any day on which no special Mass is settled.

In any case, these gatherings form an excellent means of bringing together active and honorary members, as well as the poor and benefactors; we know so little of the families helped by our Conferences, outside those which we visit ourselves. We should have an excellent opportunity of uniting the classes, those who give and those who receive.. It is for this reason that we now multiply everywhere, Christmas trees, Feast of First Communion, as well as social meetings. To bring the poor to these ceremonies, we might even add the attraction of blessed bread « pain beni » to which they are always very sensitive. It is to the good will of all we make our appeal, my dear brothers, to extend and develop these offerings of the Divine Sacrifice.

People talk much, in our time, of the strength of union and they are right; but the Church has taught it to us long ago by the Communion of Saints which unites us not only to the living but to the dead. Our Society reckons, we trust, a great number of brothers in the other world near to God: we shall profit by their merits as they will profit by ours, we shall thus augment the temporal and spiritual graces of which we stand in such great need for ourselves, our works and our poor.

Ozanam writing to one of his young brothers in 1836, that is to say at the commencement of our Conferences said « Do you not

find that it is marvellously sweet to feel ones heart beat in unison with so many other young people scattered over the soil of our Country? Do you not find that in casting the good work which we have just done into the common treasury, one loves to see it lose itself amongst a million other good works which have been placed there at the same time, and all joining together to become a single offering to Him from whom all proceeds? »

« May we not say that Charitable Societies where merits thus accumulate and mingle together so as to earn an immense interest on the day of reckoning, are as the Savings Banks of Eternity ? »

What a prophetic inspiration, my dear brothers in these words of our founder? Let us then form with our prayers a sacred battalion, a sort of invincible army, to resist the tempests of this world, and let us accumulate our supplications and our good works in this Savings Bank of Eternity.

P. CALON.

Paris, 12th December 1915.

Gentlemen and dear Brothers.

As every retreat should result in a resolution, will you permit me to propose one to you, asking you as well as my brothers of France to hold firmly to it. This is to observe more faith-

fully than ever the Rule and the spirit of our Society, and, to emphasise one point, not to abandon or to refrain from the strict holding of the weekly meeting in every Conference.

Why this recommendation you may ask?

Because ,after reading the reports which the several Councils and Conferences have sent this year to the Council-General, I have found that since the beginning of the War, many Conferences, even in Paris, only assemble once a fortnight and sometimes even less often. Should such a practice become general it would be the sign of a veritable decline in our works, and above all in the development of our brothers.

I will try to convince you of this, and in order to do so I will commence by going back a long way, to the birth of our Society.

When the seven young men who founded it came together, they were far from foreseeing the constitution of a great Society. Ill content with the discussions in their conferences on history and philosophy, and with the disunion resulting therefrom, they decided to form a union amongst Christians, in order mutually to support their weakness, to defend themselves from the seductions of the world, and to protect their faith. It is first for our own good said Ozanam that our Society has been founded, and as faith is dead without works, they resolved to practice that work of mercy, which presen's itself naturally to the mind as the most simple and the most suitable to the generality of

the faithful, that is, visitation of the poor. This was done quite simply only looking to the present, without thought of the future. Ozanam alone seems to have quickly had a fore—knowledge of what might happen to their little party new. Thus was founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, an association of charity; charity in as the most extended meaning of the word ; love of God and one's nieghbour, also an association of prayer and good works which is characterised by meetings of the brothers, and by visiting the poor. So much so, that no one is an active member of the Society unless he attend the meetings of a Conference and visits the poor. The most excellent works, such as Patronage, cannot exempt him from this; Presidents and members of Councils are equally bound to it.

The Society, then, has two ends, to do much spiritual good to its members by the exercise of charity and to do a little spiritual and temporal good to a few poor persons visited in the name of Jesus Christ. If it did not always seek to unite these two ends it would lose its reason for existing for of it was only concerned with the sanctification of its members by pious exercises, there are many confraternities and Third Orders which fulfil this condition; if it only thought of relieving the poor, it would only augment the public and private institutions which exist for this end.

It follows that the Society is called on to exercise a twofold action; external on the people

whom it relieves; internal on its members. By the first alone the public knows and judges it, sometimes unjustly, seeing only in it a philanthropic work. Nevertheless the second end, the most unknown, is the most important. It is to this latter end that I wish to draw your attention, speaking to you only of the frequency of our meetings, for, without these there would be no training of the Brothers, and no initiation into the spirit of the Society.

What then are the virtues which are able to develop in them a regular attendance of our Conferences in order to perfect them? Assuredly they are not all classed amongst the great Christian virtues. Should the least among them be sometimes the almost natural appanage of some privileged characters, the majority being generally acquired by a personal effort made fruitful by grace, all contribute in beautifying souls and making them most acceptable in the sight of God and of men.

First, Punctuality—which is a form of obedience. At the hour fixed the members must repair to the room of their assembly. Then *simplicity* — this room is a modest ; it has for its furniture a table and a few chairs; on the table there are only two books; the Manual and the one from which will be drawn the spiritual reading.

Then comes Piety. — The sitting opens and closes with prayer, prayer said in common which God blesses and hears in a singular manner. Prayer is offered for

for the sick, for the dead, and for the poor. Then *Spiritual reading*—refreshes the soul and maintains Faith.

Humility and cordiality. — There must be no traces of social or intellectual superiority amongst the Brothers. The interests of the poor are reviewed. The spirit of the discussion is in every way different to anything resembling contention or dispute; it is a spirit of self denial and deference to the feelings of one's neighbour. Without avoiding publicity, one must abstain from attracting the attention of the public. Praises and funeral orations for members are forbidden.

Generosity. — The collection bag asks for a generous alms.

Thus during this short reunion, one has enjoyed an hour of real Christian peace, and one leaves the meeting rich in edification with an emulation to equal the best, Friendships are made, based on a mutual esteem, and a community of sentiment, which are for this reason more pleasant and more solid than any wordly relation.

Yes, my dear Brothers, it is by the assiduous attendance at our Conferences that the true spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul is acquired, a spirit of piety, simplicity, humility, and of brotherly love which we ask God to maintain always amongst us.

M. Pagès one of my venerated predecessors, said in one of his addresses, that there was no

work more useful to ourselves, since it leads us to work for our salvation and to hope for the reward promised to charity. He added « If I dared, I would also say there is nothing more useful for our special works. There is in our Society a certain intellectual and moral discipline, which forms the spirit and makes it apt to undertake other enterprises. It is a mistake to believe that we can, at any moment, occupy ourselves usefully with the founding and conduct of new works, unless we have first had a sort of apprenticeship, besides which it is always a good thing to be able to lean on the traditions of our Society in order to clear up certain difficulties which result from contact one with another. » Here is, indeed, the vital point.

My dear brothers, many among you belong to other useful, indispensable and excellent Christian works. It is to them I address myself, and I ask them; is there one of these works which has a decisive influence on your religious and moral development? No. The Society of St Vincent de Paul alone has had this power, and it is its spirit which you have brought to bear on other works and which has given them strength. Mgr Mermillod has said with reason of our Society that it was the Seminary of good works.

And now we open the Rule; we read there Chapter one, regarding Conferences, Article 6. *The Conferences meet upon such days and at*

such hours as they themselves may appoint, and the commentary which follows says :

« It is, however, important to be precise upon a point to which the Council General attaches much importance, that is to say the weekly periodical occurence of the meetings, As the Rule does not lay down this period expressly, an inference has sometimes been drawn that meetings need only take place every fortnight or every month. Except in rural conferences, where, on account of the distance, difficulty of the roads, or different local circumstances, meetings every eight days would be, at times, too troublesome, the Council-General has not ceased to advise Conferences to meet every week, as has been the rule since the commencement of the Society and as is almost the universal practice. The object of our meetings is, as has already been said, to form, above all things, Christian relations amongst the members, and to strengthen them in piety by mutual good example. But a meeting every fortnight, and still less every month, is inadequate for such a result, especially when there must be absences caused by sickness, business or travelling etc. The result would be that at the end of a year, they would scarcely have seen, or known each other, and many years may go by in this way without that Christian intimacy, which the Society has in view, being formed amongst its members. »

The Council General, some time since,

adopted the absolute rule only to grant aggregation to Conferences which hold a meeting every week, except in the case of certain rural Conferences on the conditions mentioned above. Thus in demanding aggregation, Conferences undertake an engagement which it is their duty to keep.

I will add, though I am surprised that the commentary I have just quoted makes no mention of it, that the importance of the meetings is affirmed by the brief of our Holy Father Pope Gregory XVI, who grants a monthly Plenary Indulgence to Brothers who attend at least three of the four meetings of their Conference. It is not their visiting the poor, which seems the more meritorious act, to which the Indulgence is attached, but to assiduous attendance at the meetings, because this latter is indispensable to the life of the Conference.

Yes, it is indispensable to the life of the Conference as well as to the training of each particular Brother, and yet it is not enough. In order to penetrate to the source of the spirit of the Society, in order to practice fruitfully its works, it is necessary to add a presonal work; the study of the Manual.

It is hardly credible, but yet it is true, that there are some amongst our brothers who have never turned its pages and perhaps even some who do not even know of this little book, in which is to be found all the spirit, and, so to speak, all the substance of our works... Let us

then rapidly examine our Manual. This summary review will be useful to any body We open it, what do we find there?

On the first page the approbation of the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. His Eminence thus expresses himself; « We wish that this Manual may be successful in helping the members of this pious -and charitable Society to preserve its spirit and traditions. » These words would suffice to prove the utility and importance of the Manual, and thus my advice rests on the highest authority in the diocese.

Then we find the Introduction, as it was written in 1845, by M. Bailly, the first of our Presidents General inspired with the works and the writings of Saint Vincent de Paul, initiating us in to this spirit. I do not hesitate to repeat, to this spirit of humility, simplicity, piety and brotherly union which was, and will always be the stoul of our action and without which we should be condemned to be useless servants.

We then find the text and the commentary on our Rule, written at the end of the year 1835. Born with the Society itself, it was indeed, but the confirmation of the practices and customs tried by our first Brothers. The explanatory notes may have received some few alterations, the Rule itself, however, has not varied, is has withstood the test of time.

After the text of the Rule, we find the prayers recited by all Conferences, which have become, thanks to the multiplication of these latter, a perpetual prayer ascending to God in

the name of charity from all parts of the world. The beautiful prayer for the special use of the members of the Society, to the recitation of which is attached an Indulgence of 300 days, was composed by the successor of M. Bailly, M. Gossin, whose presidency, all too short, — it lasted only two years — had a great influence on the beginnings of the Society ..

Then is offered for our examination the treasure of indulgences granted by the Holy See to our Brothers, our fathers, mothers, and our wives, to benefactors, to the poor visited by us, and to the young in our Patronages. The list is enriched, or the gaining made more easy, under each Pontificate,

We then read the most important of the discourses and letters by which the Sovereign Pontiffs have manifested their sentiments of paternal interest for our Society, on notable occasions, especially the letter of Pope Pius X appointing the Cardinal Protector his legate to represent him at the festival of the centenary of Ozanam and the discourse pronounced by His Eminence at the international assembly of Conference. We all still remember the enthusiasm elicited by his triple homage to Ozanam, to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and to France.

We then find the circulars, so substantial and so practical, of the Presidents and Secretaries General; and to finish up with a short description of the principal works of the Society.

Here, in a few words, is what this book, too little known and too much neglected, offers to us. But who does not feel on dwelling upon these subjects, and joining thereto the reading of the little work which treats of « The origin and objects of the Society », in thus penetrating into the history of our Society, that we cannot help loving more warmly, more effectively, this work of humble beginnings, of providential developments, and recognising the authority of rules which have so wise an origin ?

Let every Brother, then, possess a Manual Many conferences have the laudable custom of presenting a copy to each candidate, as a gift of welcome. It is a custom which ought to be general. The recruits in a year are never numerous enough in a Conference to cause the to price of it weigh unduly on the budget.

Let us read then, let us read often with reflection and devotion this book, in which our ancestors have gathered together all that their experience, their wisdom, a profound study of life and of the works of our holy Patron have been able to collect most nourishing for charitable souls. What moment, moreover, is more opportune to give ourselves to this study, than that, in which we live in the presence of calamities not less terrible than those which sustained in Saint Vincent de Paul those efforts of devotion and those prodigies of character, which will excite the admiration of all ages!

D'HENDECOURT.

PRINCIPAL WORKS OF THE SOCIETY

Special instructions have, through the care of Council-General, been published with reference to the principal works undertaken by the Society in addition to the visitation of the poor. It will be sufficient to give a brief enumeration of them here.

Christian Schools.

The education of the children of the working class occupies a place in the first rank of these works. Through a great part of the country the school has been declared neutral. Everywhere the Conferences have given their attention to the foundation of Christian schools. In some countries, such as England, Holland and the United States, the Conferences have themselves established Sunday-schools for poor children. Our brothers of Smyrna and Beyrouth also support schools at their own expense.

In France « Catechism classes » have been established for children of the public schools. These schools are under the direction of the parochial clergy.

Patronages (*)

The most important Patronages comprise sections for *scholars*, *apprentices*, and *workmen*, which generally meet at different hours. One or more Chaplains are charged with the spiritual direction. The President and members of the Council have the care of the selection and contracts of apprenticeship. The Patronage gives part of its time to recreation and amusements; but a place is always reserved for religious instruction.

Patronages are also established in the country on the initiative of either the Clergy or the Conferences. The latter co-operate in the work either by contribution, or by the personal assistance of the members.

The Conferences also practice the Patronage of Scholars, by visiting schools under the direction of Christian Masters, by paying the school-fees for a number of children, by sending them marks, and by distributiing prizes.

Holy Families (+)

The title is applied to those pious assemblages which are held, either on Sunday at the hour for service, or during the week. The meet-

(*) A leaflet « Simple Patronage work », 3d. per dozen can be obtained from the Librarian of the Society.

(+) « Œuvre des Saintes-Familles » new edition can be obtained from the Secretary-General, 6, rue de Furstenberg, Paris, price 50 centimes.

ings are attended by workmen who have been enrolled. Besides Mass, Vespers, or Benediction, the programme of the gatherings includes a short address by a lay speaker. A tombola is drawn by lot, and *short readings* or almanacks are distributed. Sometimes a medical doctor gives free consultation. A « Holy Family » is the natural complement of a Conference in large towns.

The Free Secretariat (*)

The poor find there, once or twice a week, members of Conferences who place themselves at their disposal either for writing their letters, or for helping them by useful information, or by making personal applications to find employment or some work, or for giving them useful information and even advice on business matters.

Marriage Committees (+)

In many places chiefly outside France — following the example of the Charitable Society of Saint Francis Regis, which was a forerunner of ours, the Conferences use the Free Secretariat to prevent or to put an end to unlawful

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(*) « Œuvre des Secretariat des Familles » can be obtained from the Secretary-General, 6, rue de Furstenberg, price 60 centimes.

(+) « Souvenirs de famille » or « Livrets de Mariage » can be obtained from the Secretary-General, price 14 francs for 25, 27 francs for 50, and 50 francs for 100. Single copies 60 centimes.

unions by assisting the poor to fulfil the formalities of marriage. In great cities, especially in Paris, several Conferences combine to organise marriage Committees and supply them with the resources, generally very modest, which they require.

Communal Kitchens.

This name is applied to the ovens or kitchens where the food for use of the families of the workmen are prepared. Meals are paid for by means of gifts which charitable persons distribute to the poor in the course of their visits or when alms are solicited. Each oven has its own administration and places its orders as it may, so that receipts and expenditure may balance. Many however, have to receive subventions from Conferences or Particular Councils. At most of the ovens a Sister of Charity presides at the distribution; but one of the members of the work should be present at the opening and recite a short prayer before the serving begins.

Workmen's Gardens.

The free grant of small plots of ground intended for cultivation as kitchen gardens has been practised by the Conference since the start of this work in 1892. Our brothers have here found a means of increasing the resources of the families they assist, thanks to a work which is in reality only a healthy distraction, and, at the same time, of deepening their moral influence on all the members of the family by conversa-

tions more prolonged than the visits to the garden permit. Experience has further revealed that garden work is an excellent preventative of intemperance and tuberculosis, the two great scourges that work such havoc amongst the most destitute of the working class, to whom the Conferences devote themselves by preference.

Holiday settlements. . . . . . .

It is similarly for the purpose of fighting tuberculosis that the Conferences of several towns in France and other countries have multiplied for some time past the number of children sent to the country during the vacation months. Four weeks generally suffice to give colour to the children from the towns, emaciated by the slums, and to sensibly increase their weight. There is added to the air-cure a soul cure of good déportment and religious observances — thanks to the influence of a Chaplain. It is therefore from this point of view a Patronage work. The Conferences generally co-operate with a special work of a Catholic character for the placing of children whose travelling and lodging expenses they pay. Several Particular Councils however have established settlements for the use of the Conferences within their area.

Libraries.

Many parishes are provided with libraries, but the rules prescribed for the preservation of the works, impose obligations, that it is beyond the power of the poor to fulfil, especially if the

books are placed in the hands of their children. Special libraries, are, therefore, needed by the Conferences. Everywhere the distribution of good books ought to accompany gifts of food. In order that its circle of readers may be retained and increased, it is imperative that the library should be enriched each year by the purchase of new books or by resort to the travelling or circulating libraries, which exist in several dioceses and one of which at Paris is for the whole of France.

The Council-General, publishes under the name of « L'Ami de la Famille », Short Readings, a small Illustrated Journal in French, of 44 numbers a year. It formerly published several almanacks and hopes to be able to resume them.

Penny Banks (*)

This name is given to small Savings Banks, intended to help the poor in the payment of their rents. A brother receives every week, at an appointed hour, the savings of the poor, and the Conference pays the depositors an interest.

Certain Conferences in Paris have recently founded « Savings Banks, in view of Mar-

(*) In Great Britain a set of bank books may be had free from the Post—Master General. A pamphlet on Penny Banks may be had free from the offices of the Society in Ireland.

Leaflets on Penny Banks can be obtained from the Librarian to the Superior Council of England. Price 3d. per dozen.

riage », which function on the same principles, but in a different manner.

The Large Family.

This work was established in 1909 for the purpose of assisting needy families which comprised at least five children to procure for themselves sufficiently healthy and roomy quarters. Building is not part of the work; the families are induced to find better accommodation, and, after enquiry, a quarterly grant is made to them, which represents a quarter or a third of the rent according to their burdens, and which is paid to them on the eve of each quarter day.

Several groups of Conferences have adopted this work which operates at Paris and its environs and in the departments which are within the circumscription of a Particular Council. The remarkable results obtained both from the moral point of view, as well as from that of the family health, have determined the Council-General to recommend to our various Councils the extension of this work.

Clothing Depot.

It is important for each Conference to have a clothing depot to store the clothes which it buys or the food which it distributes in kind. The brother who keeps the clothes--depot, also generally keeps the library and the rent bank. At each meeting of the Conference he presents a

report concerning the clothes-depot and of the applications he has received. This control greatly stimulates zeal.

The Clothing Depot may also serve as an office for the *Committee of Marriages* and the Free Secretariat.

VISITATION OF THE SICK AT THEIR HOUSES AND IN HOSPITALS

These two works have a special organisation in many towns. In England, in the United States, in Australia and at Turin especially, the patients in hospitals are the object of the particular care of our brothers. The visit is paid regularly.

Visitation of Prisons and Religious instruction of prisoners.

From the beginning of the Society, its members have devoted themselves to visiting prisoners and labouring for their moral improvement. In America the prison authorities afford every desirable facility to the Conferences, and a great number of brothers go to instruct those detained whom they endeavour to lead back to good.

Funerals of the Poor.

In no more touching way can we show our affection for the poor than by accompanying to their last resting place those whom we have assisted during life and who have died with the consolations of religion. This work of interest and respect is, at the same time, the best protest against those « civil » burials organised by impious sects. In many Conferences a member is charged with despatching to his Brothers the invitations.

THE END.

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